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FAMILY SERMONS.

BY THE

REV. E. W. WHITAKER,

LATE OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD:

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SERMON I.

ON SERVING GOD ONLY.

MATT. VI. 24.

No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

“ **H**OW long (said the prophet Elijah SERM.
to the people of Israel) will ye I.
halt between two opinions? If the Lord be
God, follow Him; if Baal, follow him.”

“ How long (might the present ministers of
the Gospel, with equal reason, ask those
whom they address) will ye halt between
two opinions? If Christ be, indeed, your
Lord and Master; if He be the Son of
God, true and powerful to perform the



SERM. promises which He hath made to all who
 I. are sincerely His disciples, apply yourselves
 at once, with manly firmness, to the practice of His commandments, and stedfastly walk in the paths marked out by the lessons He hath left you : but if the good things of this world be equal to the satisfaction of your desires ; if ye can with certainty obtain them, and with security enjoy them ; and if, while they are nearer at hand, ye think them as valuable in themselves as any treasures which Christ can give you, why serve the world ; drudge on in the bondage to which ye seem already more than half inclined ; and follow wherever lust, ambition and avarice, may lead you. But attempt not to mingle light with darkness ; think not to reconcile truth to falsehood ; do not imagine, that while ye are intemperate in your passions, and unrestrained in your indulgences, while present gratification alone is sought, and the dictates of temporal interest implicitly obeyed, ye can be disciples of the Gospel, or that there is any fellowship between Christ and Belial."


Thus,

Thus, I say, might the present ministers SERM.
of Christ, stricken with the inconsistency I.
and irresolution visible in the conduct of
the greater part of those to whom they
preach, justly address them. Thus ob-
serving how they one day repair to the
church, and, with uplifted hands and eyes,
petition heaven for pardon of their past
offences, and for spiritual assistance in
future; and the next, return without re-
luctance to the courses they themselves have
condemned: how they one hour listen, with
apparent attention, to their admonitions, or
recur for instruction to the laws of God;
and the next, regulate their conduct by the
maxims of the world: they might repre-
sent to them the utter absurdity of such be-
haviour, and in proof of it urge the doc-
trine of the text, that “no man can serve
two masters.”

Such is the folly of attempting to make
a state of sin and salvation compatible with
each other; so great is the absurdity of
imagining, that while we spend half our
time

SERM. time in vice, we can gain the favour of

I. God, by dedicating the remainder to His service; or, that while our zeal towards Him is but lukewarm, and the obedience we pay to His laws but partial, He will accept us as good; and reward us as faithful servants, that nothing but the repeatedly seeing men guilty of it, could justify our laying it to their charge. For if it be a matter of such difficulty as to be morally (not to say naturally) impossible to serve at the same time, and with equal fidelity, two masters, where the commands of one never interfere with those of the other: because the servant's inclination may be swayed by the most trifling difference of disposition or manners in his master's; or his behaviour be influenced by his knowing, or even fancying, that one has it in his power or will to reward him more bountifully than the other: how perfectly extravagant must be the endeavour to yield equal obedience to the injunctions of such as are ever at variance between themselves, whose manners are opposite, and whose interests clash! Yet thus
extra-

extravagant, thus completely absurd is the SERM.
conduct of every man, who holding the truth I.
of religion, and being persuaded that God 
will, in another world, impart real happiness,
and substantial blessings, to those whose be-
haviour He approves in this, thinks to ob-
tain a portion of such blessings, although
he neglect to forsake the practice of any par-
ticular vice, refuse to give up any favourite
indulgence, or to cease from the prosecution
of any beloved temporal interest.

For the service of sin is rebellion against
God. Every indulgence of a depraved ap-
petite, every act of obedience to the sugges-
tions of evil inclinations, is a contempt of
His law, and flying in the face of His
authority. He hath commanded us to keep
ourselves from pollution, to free ourselves
from sin: How then shall we continue in
sin, and yet serve Him? Is it in our power
to change the nature of things? to annih-
ilate those eternal differences that subsist be-
tween them? Can we make good evil, or
evil good? Can we alter the unchangeable

SERM. will of God, and say to the Almighty,
 I. With this Thou shalt be pleased? If we
 cannot do these things, we cannot serve
 both Him and sin. We cannot, because it
 implies a contradiction: we cannot, because
 God is not mocked: we cannot, because He
 will not receive a feigned or a partial obedience:
 we cannot, because He will not accept a divided heart.

Which then, (for it is time to determine)
 which shall we serve? to which shall we
 pay obedience? to the law of sin, which
 we find in our bodies, or to the law of
 God, which our teachers have endeavoured
 to imprint on our minds? Let us consider,
 which is our natural master, which the
 easier service, and whence we may expect
 to receive the more precious rewards!

Now as we are indebted to God for our
 existence, He has, by right of creation, a
 full and indefeasible title to our service, and
 is, from our very entrance into being, our
 natural Master. While this tie to obedience

is hourly strengthened on us by the continual accession of fresh benefits. But before we receive any thing from sin, we must begin to labour in its service; we must renounce all our obligation to our first Benefactor, and become hirelings to a stranger.

SERM.

I.

To say that there are no difficulties to be borne, that there are but few tryals of patience or fortitude to be undergone in a life of religion, and in keeping the commandments of God, would be to contradict the declarations and experience of good men in all ages, to rob the righteous of their brightest jewel, that persevering faith which carries them forward to the attainment of the high prize of their calling, and to question the wisdom of the inspired writers, who are perpetually warning us to be patient and vigilant, to bear hardship as good soldiers of Christ, and ever to bear in mind how great are the powers against which we wrestle. But still, if we fairly compare this service with the labours we must necessarily go through, and the anxiety and

SERM. uneasiness we must suffer in that of sin, we

I.

shall find most abundant reason to join with our Lord, in saying, that His yoke is easy, and His burthen light. To conquer the inclinations which the temptations of the world excite, to resist the powerful solicitations of irregular appetites, and to stem the torrent of desire which allurements and opportunity may raise, it doubtlessly requires a firm and rigorous self-denial. To reject great present advantages rather than transgress the laws of fair dealing; and to break off long-established customs, and beloved connections, and to retire from mirth and gaiety to solitude and grave reflection, rather than be a partaker in sin, are truly, in many cases, works of severe mortification. But if to these ye add the feelings excited by the contemptuous sneer of the infidel, and the scoffs of those who have learned to make a mock at sin, ye will have the chief of the real difficulties that attend the service of God, except in times of persecution: for the practice of devotion, and the discharge of the social duties which religion

religion commands us to perform, will, SERM.
even if we enter upon them reluctantly at I.
first, soon become easy, and prove a perpetually encreasing source of satisfaction and delight. While even the difficulty of those harder tasks I have mentioned, will decrease by custom, and our resolution being confirmed by exercise, and our zeal strengthened by meditation, the habit of refraining from evil will render all constraint needless, and we shall find the service in which we are engaged to be perfect freedom.

View, on the other hand, the service of sin! and ye will find the uneasiness and repugnance which a man feels on first embarking in vicious courses are no more than an earnest of the solicitude and remorse, of the anxiety, vexations, and disappointments, that attend his progress. At first, when not yet lost to sense of shame, nor hardened against the reproofs of conscience, he anxiously strives to conceal his mis-deeds from others, and to palliate the guilt of them to himself; living in constant dread of discovery

SERM. very without, and at ceaseless war within.


I. When farther advanced in iniquity, the evil so sorely apprehended overtakes him; his real character becomes known; the good despise and avoid him; and he is no longer favourably received but by such as either partake in or profit by his crimes.

Is he a voluptuous man, indulgence enflames his appetites, they gain a complete ascendancy over him, and he becomes their slave; dragged by them to the commission of crimes, at the enormity of which he would formerly have shuddered, he lives only to his lusts, and retains little of either the principles or the reason of a man. If vanity, pride, ambition, or avarice, govern him, these too gather strength by exercise, and being unresisted, obtain a predominancy so absolute, as to make their slaves deaf to either the calls of friendship, the suggestions of reason, the cries of the oppressed, or the supplications of the distressed. So hard a master is sin, that our most amiable affections must be renounced, our most worthy
 qualities


qualities parted with in its service. And SERM.
for what? What are the blessings obtained I.
under a thralldom so severe? What are the
good things for which so many thus hardly
labour?

Let the voluptuary rate his enjoyments as high as he pleases, from the nature of them they can never be of long duration, while they must too be subject to much and vexatious interruption; to many disappointments the pursuit of them inevitably leads; they bring remorse with them; and numerous are the evils consequent upon them. Observe a man grown old in intemperance; consider him either as reviewing his past life, or looking forward to future periods of his existence. Considered in the first light, if he views the pleasures in which he has indulged himself with complacency, he still must view them as past, and never to be renewed: and what the degree of mortification flowing from that must be, I leave you to imagine. But if he holds them in another view, he must
detest

SERM. detest their remembrance ; since they have

I.  robbed him of all the comfort to be received from the prospect of future happiness, and left him nothing in return but debility, disease, and the horrors of a wounded conscience. And if we consider such a one as looking forward into eternity, his dread of the just sentence to be passed on his innumerable offences must raise in his breast torments, which God forbid any of us should be able to describe ; since nothing but feeling them could give us an adequate power of expression.

Answerable to these rewards bestowed on the voluptuous are those which sin gives to her servants in other lines. If, after many years spent in toil and difficulties, after passing through numberless dangers, and hours of anxiety, which no earthly glories can repay, they do at length gain the end of their wishes ; they then find the emptiness of those things after which they have so long been labouring ; they find that they *have* their reward : while the years in which
they


they can enjoy it draw fast towards an end, SERM.
and no hope of future blessing, no ground I.
for expecting happiness hereafter remains 
unto them. Such is the gain of the sinner :
what he obtains with labour, he enjoys
with uncertainty : when he dies, his pleasures
cease, and his hopes die too.

What, on the other hand, does the service of God produce ? the great reward itself, indeed, is future, but the hopes of that reward are ever present, ever certain ; they are a support under all afflictions, a source of courage and perseverance under all difficulties through life ; and when that draws to a conclusion, the glory of the righteous begins to blaze forth : with readiness he meets the change, at the approach of which the sinner trembles ; and departing hence in triumph, receives from the hand of his almighty Master, whom he loved and served, blessings becoming the power and the goodness of the Giver ; such things as neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath
it

SERM. it entered into the heart of man to conceive
I. them.

The difference between the two services and their very opposite rewards being thus considered, the impossibility I before mentioned of following both, appears still more plainly. For if ye contract a love for the indulgences of sin, ye must consequently dislike the law, which commands you to refrain from them. If ye esteem the pleasures sin can give you worthy your attention, since ye cannot obtain them but by the loss of the blessings which God hath promised to the righteous, by pursuing those, ye must manifest a contempt for these. The doctrines of religion ever press hard on the conduct of the sinner; to these, therefore, he soon becomes hostile; and for the use of the means of it he daily is less disposed; till at length he generally attacks the truth of the first, and most openly derides the last.

These

These observations constant experience SERM.
justifies. Attend to the progress of the I.
abandoned libertine: it has been gradual. 
He first transgressed with fear, with trembling hands he carried to his lips the poisoned cup of sin; but having once tasted the intoxicating liquor, it soon overcame him; his scruples were lulled, his shame was banished. He now laughs at what he formerly most revered; now hates those paths from which he formerly resolved never to deviate. Recollect the effect of sin on your own minds: Have ye never found how soon the tendency to evil is increased; how very short an intermission of your due devotions estranges, as it were, your mind from the payment of them; how much the having yielded to one temptation disarms you against the attack of the next; how one transgression does often inevitably involve you in another; how crime is linked to crime, and vice joined to vice?

And is not then the voluntary venturing on the commission of one fault, with the
3 thought

SERM. thought of stopping there, one, though of
I. the most common, yet of the maddest imaginations, that ever entered the human brain? Is not the being satisfied with our spiritual state, because we have not quite forgot God and religion, beyond all comparison absurd? Is not the hope of being accepted as a disciple of Christ, although we renounce not the service of sin, most contradictory, most apparently extravagant?

This utter impossibility of serving both God and Mammon, I now set before you, as introductory to those discourses which, having finished my observations on the faith and doctrines of the Gospel, I mean to read to you on its precepts. For in speaking to these, I shall follow the arrangement marked by the two tables of the commandments; considering, in their order, the duties therein prescribed, as explained and amplified by the words of our blessed Saviour. Who, ye may remember, did, at the commencement of His ministry, point out to the disciples some particulars of conduct which
neither

neither they nor their countrymen seem to have supposed were contained under the laws they had received. Thus “ Ye have heard (said He) that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgement: But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgement.”

S E R M.
I.

For the first commandment, “ Thou shalt have none other Gods before me,” is no less transgressed by joining the service of any other with that of the true God, than by entirely relinquishing the worship of the latter, and setting up a strange object of devotion. Neither should this trespass be considered as consisting in the outward payment of homage only; for when we give to any other that fear, love, and reliance, which are due to the Lord alone, we in fact make a transfer of our natural allegiance, and set up an idol in our hearts.

SERM. On this ground it is that St. Paul calls
 I. covetousness idolatry : and, indeed, so palpable is the nature of our offence, when we trust for full security, or permanent happiness, in any being but the Lord, that the rebuke of it is become proverbial ; and when a man appears to be more attached to any thing than he ought to be, we naturally say, it is his idol. Some men sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag, making the obtainment of the goods of this world the first objects of their anxiety ; and trusting to their own laborious exertions to put them in a situation which they esteem replete with security and peace. Others shew themselves lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God ; and by these, as well by the former, the offices of devotion, and the duties of piety, are neglected as of inferior consideration, and, in lieu of their striving to secure the divine patronage, by the only method in which we are expressly warned that it is to be obtained, by seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness before all things, the hope of the first is abandoned.

abandoned to future contingencies ; and it SERM.
is well if the obtainment of the last is not I.
daily removed to a remoter distance. In
like manner we too often see the friendship
of the great or rich courted in a mode that
may justly be called idolatrous ; when in
compliance with their corruptions, or in
submission to their fancies, the truth is
dissembled, the duties of religion are neg-
lected, and the commandments of the Lord
transgressed.

Nor is it merely by the more immediately
selfish views of worldly interest, that we
thus make to ourselves other gods. An
inordinate fondness for any particular con-
nection will betray us into the same crime ;
and we may discern in the world affection
to particular objects carried to an excess
which is incompatible with either justice or
piety, and even with any real value in the
love professed. In fine, whenever we suffer
our obsequiousness to any interest, our com-
pliance with any attachment to derogate
from the obedience, or diminish the trust

SERM. we should manifest toward the Lord, (whether by exercising our worldly callings in seasons hallowed to His worship at the instigation of others, or from the suggestions of our own avarice, or following them with an intenseness inconsistent with confidence in His merciful providence, or by placing our hope of success in the world, or in any thing therein, or in seeking gratification at the expence of obedience to His laws;) we cease to serve Him alone; and lower ourselves to the mean rank of idolators, by becoming dependent on the creature instead of the Creatour alone for happiness.

And to no more direct a transfer of our allegiance than this were we of this part of the earth a few years ago exposed to be tempted. But now, alas! by the inhabitants of a country adjacent to our own, has the worship of the God of heaven been abolished to make way for that of a God whom their fathers knew not; a Deity of reason and of liberty, which has been exhibited to the adoration of a besotted, blasphemous,

phemous, and abandoned people, in the person of a shameless prostitute. This last ^{SERM.}
^{I.} step in apostacy, although it may appear, from its enormity, calculated to shock the human mind, and to raise itself enemies in lieu of proselytes, yet, as it affords men an example of laying aside at once all shame, and delivering themselves without remorse to the dominion of vice, will, it is to be feared, be followed by many whose faith is already undermined, and whose principles are already corrupted. Wherefore it is incumbent on Christians to prepare themselves against the assaults which may be expected from these enemies of the truth; whose best hopes of success are placed in the ease with which men are drawn into sins of uncleanness: as the daughters of Moab were the instruments by which the Israelites were tempted to worship Baal Peor. And for your support against which, I can only add to what I have, in the former part of this discourse stated, of the utter incompatibility of the practice of sin with the real worship of God, a most earnest exhortation, that ye

SERM. will now, before the inflamed state of your
 I. appetites renders you blind to truth, deaf
 to reason, strive to impress on your minds
 the very base degradation which that man
 suffers, who quits the service of the Sovereign
 of the universe to become the votary
 of any other being; who withdraws his
 name from the house and family of the
 living God, to enrol himself among the
 slaves of corruption, the children of Satan,
 the followers of those who cannot deliver
 themselves.


But this comparison between our worship
 and theirs leads to the recollection of what
 is virtually another infringement of the first
 commandment. For since the worship we
 render unto Christ our Saviour would form
 a breach of this precept, unless His unity
 with the Father were made known unto us,
 and all men were ordered to honour Him,
 even as they honour the Father; so when
 we are told, that He is the only Mediatour
 between God and man, to pray to others as
 mediators is surely giving to them the
 honour

honour due unto the Son of God alone. SERM.

Yet what is the invocation of saints and I. angels, but beyond all, the regular offices of devotion performed by the papists to the Virgin Mary, but ascribing to them this honour, and having other mediators besides Him? Consider the affront thus offered to Him, whose name has been preached to the world as the only One under heaven by which men may be saved; and ye will not be surprized, that the Spirit of Christ hath been withdrawn from those who have thus insulted Him: nor be at a loss to account for the atheistical doctrines of the present day making the most rapid and extensive progress among those who had been prepared for further apostacy, by imbibing the papal corruptions.

To conclude then, as we learn from the text, that if we attempt to divide our service God will not accept us, so may we learn from what passes in the world, as well as from the Holy Scriptures, that without His protection and support we shall be

SERM. exposed to sink into the lowest debasements.

I.  As the temptations to these therefore encrease, let us bind ourselves still closer in devotion to the Lord ; and let the miseries we now see poured on those who forsake Him, operate as a timely and effectual admonition to us, that however loud their pretensions, however fair their promises, the vanities of the apostate nations cannot profit ; but that that people can alone be happy, yea, blessed alone can be that people who have the Lord for their God,

SERMON II.

ON IDOLATRY.

I ST. JOHN V. 21.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols.


WHILE investigating the command-
ments, to discover every particular
contained under each precept, we should
not overlook the wisdom that may be dis-
cerned in the arrangement of the several
laws of both tables. They both commence
with the duties which are respectively first
in order; the one with the worship of the
only true God, the other with the honour
due unto our parents. They both close
with a precept that tends to secure the prac-
tice of the previous commandments; the
first,

SERM.

II.

SERM. first, by one that ordains a frequent commemoration of the great work of creation, and, consequently, a solemn periodical recollection of our relation and obligations to our Maker; the other, by a law which commands us to eradicate from our minds those inordinate desires which would lead us to transgress the other commandments of this second table. While the intermediate precepts are arranged according to the importance of their several subjects. Thus the first commandment having prohibited the worship of any other than the one true God, the second proceeds to forbid the worshipping Him in a manner derogatory from His glory, by presuming to bow down before any image as a representation of Him, or even to make any similitude which, in the vanity of our imaginations, we might suppose to convey any idea of Him.


Thus, in the fourth and fifth verses of the twentieth chapters of Exodus we read,
 “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is

in heaven above, or that is in the earth be- SERM.
neath, or that is in the water under the II.
earth : Thou shalt not bow down thyself to 
them, nor serve them." And in the repetition of the law, in the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, still more earnestly ; " Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire) lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the similitude of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth."


Now among the numerous proofs which the Holy Scriptures yield, that He by whose inspiration they were penned knoweth what is in man, may be reckoned the representations which these admonitions give us, of the proneness of the human race to idolatry,
a pro-

SERM. a propensity which has manifested itself
 II. among both the savage and civilized part of
 mankind during the times of ignorance, at
 which it is written, that God winked, and
 since His Gospel has been preached among
 the nations. The books of the psalms and
 the prophets abound with censures of the
 folly, and reprehensions of the guilt of this
 practice. “ Confounded (saith the psalmist)
 be all they that serve graven images, that
 boast themselves of idols.” (Psal. xcvi. 7.)
 And “ the idols of the heathen are silver
 and gold, the work of men’s hands : they
 have mouths, but they speak not ; eyes have
 they, but they see not ; neither is there any
 breath in their mouths. They that make
 them are like unto them, so is every one
 that trusteth in them.” (Psal. cxxxv. 15,
 16, 17, 18.) “ They (saith Isaiah, in his
 forty-fourth chapter) that make a graven
 image are all of them vanity, and their de-
 lectable things shall not profit : and they are
 their own witnesses, they see not, nor know,
 that they may be ashamed.” And in the
 eighteenth verse, “ They have not known
 nor

nor understood : for He hath shut their eyes SERM.
that they cannot see, and their hearts that II.
they cannot understand ; and none consider-
eth, neither is their knowledge nor under-
standing to say, I have burnt part of it in
the fire, yea, also I have baked bread upon
coals thereof : I have roasted flesh, and eaten
it, and shall I make the residue thereof an
abomination ? Shall I fall down to the stock
of a tree ? He feedeth of ashes : a de-
ceived heart hath turned him aside, that he
cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there
not a lye in my right hand ?” He had be-
fore asked, in his fortieth chapter, “ To
whom, then, will ye liken God ? or what
likeness will ye compare unto Him ? The
workman melteth a graven image, and the
goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and
casteth silver chains. He that is so impo-
verished that he hath no oblation, chooseth
a tree that will not rot : he seeketh unto
him a cunning workman to prepare a graven
image that shall not be moved. Have ye
not known ? Have ye not heard ? Hath it
not been told you from the beginning ?
Have

SERM. Have ye not understood from the foundations
II. of the earth? It is He that sitteth upon the
 circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof
are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the
heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out
as a tent to dwell in; that bringeth the
princes to nothing: He maketh the princes
of the earth as vanity; yea, they shall not be
planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea,
their stock shall not take root in the earth:
and He shall also blow upon them, and
they shall wither; and the whirlwind shall
take them away as stubble. To whom then
will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith
the Holy One?"

The exposure of the folly and guilt of
idolatry which the prophets thus made to
their own countrymen, the preachers of the
Gospel repeated to the nations; arguing,
that since we derive our own being from
God, we surely ought not to suppose the
Godhead like unto gold, or silver, or stone,
graven by art and man's device, thus com-
paring what we can make to Him who
made

made us. Still, although they triumphed SERM.
by their doctrine over idolatry, and brought II.
their converts back to the worship of their 
Creatour, the spirit of prophecy which
was in them testified, that another relapse
into the same absurd and impious practices
would take place; on which account, as
well as on that of the then present peril
arising from being surrounded with idolaters,
the caution given by St. John in the
text was necessary, “ Little children, keep
yourselves from idols.”

But some man, perhaps, would ask,
What need of repeating it in the present
day? Is there any danger of men becoming
idolaters when knowledge is so much diffused,
that almost all ranks are taught, in
some measure, to reason for themselves?
In return to this question, let it be remembered,
that the grossest worship of images,
and the most abominable consequences of
such worship, prevailed in the ancient world,
at the time when the arts and sciences were
carried to the highest perfection, and knowledge

SERM. ledge was in its most flourishing state, and
II. it was the publication of the Gospel only
that delivered this part of the earth from
the general delusion. Whence it may most
fairly and cogently be argued, that it is the
knowledge of this Gospel specifically that
is our great preservative against a relapse
into the former abominations. In propor-
tion, therefore, as the acquisition of this
knowledge is neglected, the danger of yield-
ing to temptations to idolatry encreases.
That the cultivation of this knowledge is
neglected, needs unhappily no proof; the
thinness of our publick congregations, and
the ignorance of the Scriptures too visible
in, perhaps, the generality of those who
call themselves Christians, bear ample testi-
mony of the defect. While the Roman
apostacy still continues, and the ministers
of her who has been the mother of spiritual
fornication as well as of the other, still
persevere in sedulously propagating her
tenets, and in striving to make proselytes
to her doctrines.

That

That those of her communion had really SERM.
departed from their former pretensions, and
laid aside their ancient spirit, was an ima- II.
gination too hastily taken up by some in-
cautious persons of this country, as has
been manifested by late events; and that
the charge of idolatry, solemnly brought
against her by our own church, is with
justice continued, the images before which
her members continue to bow down, her
invocations and prayers addressed to angels
and saints, and her regular offices of devo-
tion to the Virgin Mary; but, above all,
the unrepealed declarations of the council
of Trent in support of her abominations,
do, spite of all the barefaced sophistry her
partizans have employed in excusing them,
bear ample testimony. For whither tends
the meagre plea that the veneration paid to
the images rests not in them as its final ob-
ject, but passes to the beings whose images
they are, but to prove, that those who bow
down to them worship others beside the
Lord? Or to what will serve the forced
distinction these deceivers make between

SERM. worshipping and serving? As if when the
 II. commandment says, “Thou shalt worship
 the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou
 serve,” it did not forbid the worshipping
 as well as the serving any other but Him.
 Nay, were we even to grant that it is not
 forbidden to pay a certain measure of re-
 spect to the representations of the favourites
 of Heaven, would it be right to continue it
 when it had once proved the occasion of
 superstitious veneration, of idolatrous wor-
 ship? The great apostle of the Gentiles
 writes, “All things are lawful for me, but
 all things are not expedient: all things are
 lawful for me, but all things edify not.”
 How can those, then, who boast themselves
 his successors in teaching the world, think
 themselves blameless in sanctioning and
 supporting practices which have not merely
 caused weak brethren to offend, but opened
 a door to the grossest idolatry in thousands
 of her communion? How is the work of
 edification carried on by those who store
 every city under their direction with images
 so addressed by the multitude, as to bring
 to

to the mind of the learned traveller the SERM.
practices of the Pagan idolater : who affu- II.
redly went no further than the corrupted
Christian, in supposing that that specifick
image of Apollo, or of Venus, before which
he offered his supplications, would perform
them, but hoped that the fancied deity,
whose representation it was, would regard
his offering. Or, if the Papist will insist
that the Pagan went further, and worshipped
the stock or the stone, as having power in
itself to help him, what shall prevent the
ignorant Christian, who has followed his
example so far, from imitating it to the
end? That he has, indeed, so done, a strong
suspicion is provoked, by the preference
known to be given among the Romanists
to some images of the Virgin Mary above
others, and the more numerous miracles
said to be wrought in favour of the votaries
of our Lady of Loretto, for instance, than
of those of our Lady of any other place.
Or if the mighty works supposed to be
done at the shrine of a particular image be
not to be ascribed to the power of the image
D 2 itself,

SERM. itself, they must be attributed to the more
 II. especial favour shewn by the Virgin to those
 who offer up their supplications to her before it: and what is this but ascribing to her the perfection of being present in many places (and if in many places, why not in all places?) at once, and giving her the divine attribute of Omnipresence?

The same inference of impiety and idolatry necessarily results from the practice of putting different places and persons under the patronage of the same saint, since this dedication and devotion must either be nugatory, (which the Papist will by no means allow) or the saint must be able to know, and to help the infirmities of several votaries at once, and thus be likened unto Him who alone filleth heaven and earth.

True it is, that with a boldness of sophistry which can be described so well by no other terms as those of St. Paul, prophetick of these very teachers, “ speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their consciences
 feared

seared with a hot iron," the doctors of the SERM.
Roman church have laid down as a just II.
rule of reasoning, that although any parti-
cular doctrine ought to be received on due
authority, it by no means follows, that all
the necessary inferences from it should also
be received; whence they endeavour to
evade the absurd and impious consequences
flowing from their own doctrine of the in-
vocation of saints; saying, it does not fol-
low because their church allows of it, that
therefore she holds that they can hear the
prayers addressed unto them. But is not
addressing their petitions to those who can-
not hear, as well as to Him who can, di-
viding with others the honour due to Him
alone who hath declared, " My glory will
I not give to another, neither my praise to
graven images?" *Is. xlii. 8.*

In fact, so well founded is the charge of
idolatry made by the church of England on
that of Rome, that after all the attempts
of these blind leaders of the blind to pal-
liate

SERM. liate or colour their practices, their opposition to the second commandment is so glaring, that they themselves have thought it proper to omit this law in some of their books of devotion, and divide another into two, to preserve the full number of ten commandments delivered to Moses, thus verifying that prophetick characteristick of the man of sin in which he is described, as he “ who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God.” 2 Theff. ii. 4.

But it may be further justly asked, Whether the injunction of the apostle, “ Little children, keep yourselves from idols,” does not extend beyond the mere worship of images, even to the making any thing that we may profanely suppose bears any similitude to the Deity? From his admonition being so general, we may fairly conclude, that he did not mean to recommend to Christians less than the commandment itself required; and that forbids not only the worship, but the formation of any image


as a representation of God. “Thou shalt SERM.
not make unto thee any graven image, or II.
any likeness of any thing that is in Heaven
above, or that is in the earth beneath, or
that is in the water under the earth.” And
I have already stated to you the indignant
questions put by his prophet on this sub-
ject: “To whom will ye liken God? or
what likeness will ye compare unto Him?”
Yet, alas! this daring transgression is not
among Christians confined to the adherents
of the papacy. Neither pictures, indeed,
of the invisible Father, nor paintings of the
Holy Trinity, are, in this country, exhibited
as in those of the Romanists, but the inex-
plicable and incomprehensible nature of God
is most profanely represented by a triangle,
not only in the coarse symbolical drawings
of fanatics, whose low conceptions and gross
ignorance make such practices less sur-
prizing, but even in the altar-pieces of
churches, where they are constantly under
the eye of the parochial clergy, and, at
times, exposed to the inspection of an arch-

SERM. deacon or a bishop *. Still all these minif-
 II. ters of the church have declared their assent
 to those articles which assert, that the second
 book of Homilies contains a godly and
 wholesome doctrine; and this book does, in
 the most pointed manner, condemn even the
 making, and still more the setting up any
 image, either by painting or sculpture, in
 churches.

Now as this doctrine of the reformers
 seems to have fallen so far into oblivion,
 that those who have most explicitly under-
 taken to support it, contribute to prepare
 the way for a return of idolatry among us,
 by both conniving at, and assisting in intro-
 ducing pictures and painted symbols into

* The authour has been an eye-witness of this ab-
 surd and impious attempt to express, by a pourtraiture
 on a wall, the object of christian worship in two
 churches in the diocese of London, and in one in that
 of Winchester; and in the major part of these instances
 which have fallen under his own notice, least the in-
 tention of the similitude should be mistaken, the name
 of God is inscribed therein.

our

our places of worship, let me repeat to you SERM.
some passages from the learned, able, and II.
zealous Homily against idolatry, which will 
demonstrate what, at our separation from
Rome, was holden by the church of Eng-
land on this point, though now apparently
forgotten by many of her ministers.

Having quoted the following passage from
a primitive Christian writer on the very
words of the text; “ St. John deeply con-
sidering the matter sayth: My little chil-
dren, keepe yourselves from images or idols.
Hee sayth not now, keepe yourselves from
idolatrie, as it were from the service and
worshipping of them: but from the images
or idols themselves; that is, from the very
shape and likenesse of them. For it were
an unworthy thing, that the image of the
living God should become the image of a
dead idoll.” The Homily continues; “ Doe
you not thinke those persons which place
images and idols in churches and temples,
yea shrine them even over the Lord’s table,
even as it were of purpose to the worshipping
and

SERM. and honoring of them, take good heed to
 II. either of St. John's counsell, or Tertullian's?

For so to place images and idols, is it to keepe themselves from them, or else to receive and embrace them?" Again, in the third part of the same sermon, " This is to be replied out of God's word—the images of the trinitie, which we had in every church, be by the Scriptures expressely and directly forbidden, and condemned, as appeareth by these places." After which, at the head of other passages of holy writ, two of those I have already quoted in this discourse, are cited, and a general inference is drawn from the doctrine they contain, in the following terms: " Wherefore they be convict of foolishnesse and wickednesse in making of images of God or the Trinitie: for that no image of God ought, or can be made, as by the Scriptures and good reason evidently appeareth." And a few pages after with still greater earnestness: " But images in churches and temples have beene, and be, and (as afterwards shall be proved) ever will bee offences and stumbling blockes, specially

ſpecially to the weake, ſimple and blinde common people, deceiving their hearts by the cunning of the artificer, (as the Scripture expreſſly, in fundry places, doth teſtifie) and ſo bringing them to idolatry. Therefore woe be to the erecter, fetter up, and maintainer of images in churches and temples, for a greater penalty remaineth for him then the death of the body.”

Now when ſuch are the declarations of a work which every prieſt, deacon, and benefited miniſter of the church acknowledges to contain no other ſentiments than he entertains, ſhould a member of any other reformed church reproach any ſuch with having departed from the former purity of thoſe of our communion, and with acting in contradiction to their own formal profeſſions, by permitting a ſymbolical painting of the Deity in his church, what plea can they uſe, what answer can they return, that will not convict them either of not knowing what they do as members of the church of England profeſs, or of conſenting
to

SERM. to what themselves have condemned? Happy
II. are they who can say, that these are
acts of particular congregations, to which
they have never assented; thus clearing
themselves from any share in the offences
past, as well as from being implicated in
what may arise from the very important
advantage which papal emissaries may draw
from representing, that it is manifest, from
practices being now allowed in the church
of England, which were most severely re-
probated, as tending to idolatry by our re-
formers, that these last carried their accu-
sations of the church of Rome too far; for
when they shall seem to have once fairly
established this point, they will, by the
accommodations and modifications at which
they are so expert, easily prevail on persons
of shallow information, and weak minds,
to believe, that the ground of difference is
trifling, and prevailing on them to return
into the bosom of what they will then per-
suade them to think is the catholick church,
precipitate them again into the great apostacy.
And at whose hands then will these lost
souls be required?

Signal

Signal are the judgements which the God SERM.
of Heaven hath poured on the kingdom of II.
Anti-Christ, and no less accurately do they
correspond with the prophecies that went
before concerning them, than the abomina-
tions introduced, countenanced, and obsti-
nately supported by the papal power, do
with the descriptions which the prophets
and apostles have left us of them: Shall
they not, then, be to us a warning against
becoming partakers in her sins? The notion
that we are in no danger of a relapse is as
contrary to experience as to reason: a people
depraved in their morals are easily corrupted
in their ideas of the Deity, and become as
gross in their conceptions of heavenly things
as they are in their enjoyment of earthly.
While, surely, the preaching of the apostles,
and the instruction and light with which
the first converts to christianity were blessed,
afforded them and their successors full as
much security against falling away to ido-
latry again as we can on any ground now
boast of possessing. Yet the text itself de-
monstrates, that St. John was not without
appre-

SERM. apprehension of such apostacy: And how
 II. did it commence? by the introduction of
 pictures and images into places of worship,
 with, however, express caution against wor-
 shipping them: which caution was gradu-
 ally less and less attended to, until the con-
 sequent idolatry was sanctioned and sup-
 ported even by bishops and councils; and
 that which was the Christian world became
 sunk in apostacy, and overrun with those
 impurities which ever follow the desertion
 of the true for any false object of worship.

And what is to prevent the same effects
 following from the same causes? Or, if
 men break the commandment in one point,
 and insult the divine Majesty, by pretending
 to give a representation of God's nature by
 pourtraiture, can they expect the aid of
 His Holy Spirit to prevent their being led
 into further transgression? Or having been
 once delivered from the more than Egyptian
 bondage, under which our forefathers suf-
 fered, If we willingly turn towards it again,
 can we hope not to be entrapped in the
 works

works of our own hands ? or wonder, if SERM.
our table be made a snare unto us ; and if II.
that which should have been for our welfare
become a trap. If the hospitality we have
shewn to so many persecuted priests of the
Roman communion, lead to the silent pre-
valence of their tenets among us ; and the
compassion we glory in shewing to those
who have taken refuge in our land, prove
the occasion of their doctrines obtaining an
influence among us. However blind some
may be to the danger of these things, we
ought in wisdom never to forget the dis-
graceful state of degradation in which the
inhabitants of this island did once, and
those of some countries of Europe do still
lie, through their subjection to idolatry.
When the wrath of departed saints was
made an instrument of terrour to compel
their votaries to obey the dictates of an
avaricious, a lustful, or an ambitious monk ;
when means were craftily used to give mo-
tion to the eyes and limbs of images, and
thus gain credit to the lying miracles of
which their priests boasted ; and when the
supposed

SERM. supposed superabundant merits of holy, or
 II. reputed holy, persons, were sold out in portions, under the absurd notion of supplying the deficiency of others; and thus became a most productive source of revenue to the ministers of a corrupted church, and as destructive a snare to the souls of those who trusted to the bishop of Rome's blasphemous indulgences for salvation.

Think not lightly then of the subject of my present address unto you: many wise, many mighty men, have been drawn aside by the delusions of idolatry. Neither the absurdity of the practice, nor its injuriousness to the divine Majesty, have been sufficient to stop the contagion of it. And, in the more striking instances of its progress, its success appears to have been particularly owing to female imbecility and female influence: let those of that sex, therefore, be more especially cautious how they listen to the words of any who lie in wait to deceive, and imagine they can obtain remission for their own sins by making

a profelyte, who, with all the ardour of a new convert, shall become two-fold more a child of hell than themselves. And let us all arm ourselves against the attacks of this kind which we may expect, by gaining the justest notions of the glory of Him “ whom no one hath seen, or can see ; and to Whom therefore nothing visible 'can be made like ; Who made the earth, and created man upon it ; Whose hands stretched out the heavens, and Who commanded all their hosts ; Who formeth light, and creates darkness ; Who maketh peace, and creates evil—*the Lord* Who doeth all these things. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance : Behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing ; and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before Him are as nothing ; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity ; but Who is too a jealous God, not giving His glory to another, but visiting the iniquity (and more particularly the idolatry) of the

SERM.

II.

SERM. fathers upon the children, unto the third
II. and fourth generation of them that hate
Him, and shewing mercy unto thousands in
them that love Him, and keep His com-
mandments."


SERMON III.

ON VISITING THE INIQUITIES OF THE
FATHERS ON THE CHILDREN.

EXOD. XX. 5.

*For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God,
visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon
the children, unto the third and fourth
generation of them that hate me; and
shewing mercy unto thousands in them that
love me, and keep my commandments.*


SINGULAR is the treatment which the SERM.
commandment whence these words are III.
taken has received in the world. Since,
while some corrupt Christians, (as ye have
already been apprized) sensible of the per-
petual testimony it bears against their prac-
tices, have endeavoured to obliterate it from

SERM. the table ; those without the church urge
 III.  against the portion of it which I have now
 read to you, the charge of palpable injustice,
 as threatening to inflict on the innocent the
 punishment due to the crimes of others.
 This charge hath been met by the servants
 of the Gospel in different manners ; most
 of which, it must be acknowledged, are
 calculated to afford but little satisfaction ;
 and the one which, indeed, obviates every
 objection against revelation that can be
 drawn from its containing such a menace,
 by proving that natural religion is attended
 with the same difficulty, seems to do little
 more than change the shoulder which bears
 the burthen.

As no passage through which an inroad
 can be made on our faith ought to be
 neglected ; and although the Lord give not
 account of any His doings, yet if we can
 prevent His name being blasphemed through
 ignorance, or which is but the same
 thing, prevent others from charging Him
 foolishly to their own condemnation, it

surely becomes us both in piety and charity SERM.
so to do; I shall employ this discourse in III.
reviewing before you the chief of those
interpretations of the passage of the text,
by which it has been imagined, the objec-
tions brought against it might be removed;
and pointing out in each that in which it
appears deficient, lay before you what I
conceive to be a sufficient answer to the
charge of injustice, and state what on an at-
tentive perusal of the circumstances of the
declaration made in this law, and repeated on
another occasion, seems to be the only true
ground of it.

Previous to this, however, it may pro-
perly be recommended to your attention,
that the very doctrine now so strongly ob-
jected to was currently believed through
all antiquity: the noblest compositions of
Greece and Rome advert to it as universally
acknowledged; the eastern tales and the
western fragments contain it; and it was
left to the penetration of more modern In-
fidels to except against revelation, for sup-
posing

SERM. posing the existence of a particular of the
III.  divine government, which has continued
visible to every observer, from the days of
Adam to our own.

This premised ; among those who have replied to the cavils raised against this doctrine, some of great name have supposed, that the visitation threatened is to be restrained in its intention to the punishment of national offences ; and the divine administration with regard to the peculiar people of God, hath been thought to favour this interpretation. The fact that God does thus visit national departures from righteousness on succeeding generations, cannot justly be disputed. But is this ground for arguing, that He does not visit those of individuals in like manner ? Neither does there appear less injustice in punishing one body of men for the iniquity committed by another body, than in visiting on one individual the crimes of another ; and the history of the chosen people affordeth, perhaps, as many, possibly more instances of the latter than of the former.

former. The trespasses of Solomon were SERM.
visited on his successor; and those of Ahab III.
on all his posterity. While facts, which
are every day seen in the world, consist not
with this hypothesis: since we see children
suffering in the little regard they receive, in
penury, in disease of body, and even in
weakness of intellect, the consequences of
their father's vices and ill conduct. Neither
on such only as follow the bad example set
them by their parents, and evidently merit,
by walking in the same evil ways, the
chastisements they undergo, do these evils
fall: others of upright characters may be
seen struggling with difficulties and suffer-
ings, arising from the misbehaviour of their
ancestors; a truth which is equally deci-
sive against another interpretation of the
menace; that which would confine it only
to the wicked descendants of wicked men.

Instead, therefore, of striving to devise
limits for what is in the commandment de-
nounced generally and without limitation,
let us consider what will be the necessary

SERM. consequences of allowing the fact which
III. seems in the law itself to be supposed, and
is by experience sufficiently established ; that
in the course of the divine government, the
visitations of God for sin reach even to the
descendants of sinners. In reply to every
thing which the advocates for what they
call natural religion can say, on such a doc-
trine being maintained by revelation, what
I before observed, that the difficulty affects
the cause they pretend to espouse, no less
than it does ours, is a sufficient answer ;
and therefore, whether a satisfactory account
of such a mode of proceeding can be by us
rendered or not, as in asserting it's reality
revelation hath only stated a fact discernible
by every observer, no good objection can,
on this ground, be raised against the divine
origin of the Scriptures. Which point
being secured, together with the following,
that although through the small extent of
our knowledge, particular parts of the divine
administration may seem inconsistent with
the principles of righteousness which must
pervade it, yet since the perfection of the
great

great Governour is an infinite pledge that SERM.
this can be appearance only, we may ven- III.
ture to assign what we think may tend to
elucidate the point in question ; since, if we
succeed not, there is still no mischief done.
Under this consideration, then, I will call
your attention more particularly to the case
of those who suffer under evils consequent
on the misconduct of their parents, conceiving it may be shewn, that they have no
just cause to murmur at this appointment
of Providence.

First, however, let it be observed, that
nothing having been declared as to the
direction of the infliction, but the Lord
having left it entirely undecided, whether
the visitation shall overtake an immediate,
or a distant descendant of the sinner ; whe-
ther it shall fall on one branch, or on all
his posterity ; these circumstances remain
open to be determined according to the
various characters of the descendants them-
selves. Thus the good conduct of some
may prevail to cause the execution of the
sentence


SERM. sentence to be deferred for a time ; as the
III. humiliation of the Israelitish monarch Ahab
obtained from the divine mercy, that the
evil should not be brought on in his days ;
and the foreseen great flagitioufness of
others mark theirs for the years of accumu-
lated vengeance ; as it fared with that gene-
ration of whom our blessed Lord declared,
the blood of all the prophets shed from the
foundation of the world should be required.

As to the case of those on whom, under
the general appointment, the curse on the
transgressions of their fathers may fall ; if
their own characters be vicious, these evils
form that course of correction for which
their conduct itself calls ; and whether they
be ignorant or sensible of their origin, afford
them admonitions which may be turned to
their highest benefit. For in the former
case, not being conscious of any other
source, they may consider them as the just
recompence of their own vices, by which
they are warned to repentance ; and in the
latter, feeling the extensive miseries conse-
quent

quent on sin, they thence receive an earnest SERM.
call to turn into the right way, least by III.
slighting the wrath already gone forth, by
contemning the proofs they have already
received of the weight of God's judge-
ments, they, by the hardness of their hearts,
encrease it, and cause to be heaped on them-
selves complete destruction. And if they
be of virtuous dispositions, there is, in the
visitation of their father's iniquity, only
prepared for them that state of trial, out of
which they shall come like gold from the
furnace, purified, and fit for the master's use.
Whether, too, these last discern or overlook
the real origin of the sufferings they under-
go, they will yet tend to confirm their souls
in the work of righteousness. Under the
former supposition, their perception of the
dreadful evils of sin clinging even to the
descendants of the offenders, will make them
look on the ways of vice with still greater
horror and aversion; and under the latter,
considering themselves as under the proba-
tion of their all-wise and merciful Creatour,
that He may do them good at their latter
end,

SERM. end, they will acquire from the contempla-
 III. tion of the course in which they are en-
 gaged, and of the crown of glory and of
 happiness which they may gain by con-
 quering, fresh ardour, and an encrease of
 resolution to fight the good fight. So that,
 in truth, this one visible measure of the
 divine government of visiting the iniquity
 of the fathers upon the children, is the
 ground of much of that correction for the
 amendment of transgressours, and of that
 discipline for the improving of the virtuous
 with which this life abounds.

And what if I were to say, that it is too
 the cause of the whole human race being
 in that state in which they appear? If any
 man be otherwise minded, let him disclose
 whence are derived the general evils of this
 state, but from the curse pronounced on
 our first father's transgression; the effects
 of which endure even yet: for by that we
 were delivered into the bondage of corrup-
 tion under which we groan and travail in
 pain together until now. And He, by
 whose

whose sentence we were subjected unto it, SERM.
hath, in the commandment before us, de- III.
clared Himself to those who are acquainted 
with the history of Adam's fall, to be the
same Being who still visiteth on the genera-
tions of the earth, the trespass of its first
inhabitant.

Herein, then, behold the very light in
which this declaration of the Lord's visit-
ing the iniquity of the fathers upon the
children is to be viewed; as expressing a
character which eminently distinguishes the
living and true God from all pretended
deities! Because, in the first place, none but
a permanent Being is equal to this work;
none but One whose counsels length of
time, or changes in the world, cannot ren-
der null: and, secondly, since the facts
themselves are visible and strong, in proof
that, under whose government soever the
world be, this is done, the declaration thus
made by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and
Jacob, is a claim to His own signature as
the moral Governour of the world, whose
judge-

SERM. judgements are all in the earth, and whose

III. hand is upon all the inhabitants thereof.

Moreover, that such is the intention of it, may be concluded from the declaration being placed in this commandment, where the opposition between Jehovah and idols is expressed, and its being repeated on another singular and most remarkable occasion, when the Lord passed by before Moses, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.—“ The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty: visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation.”

Behold, then, this characteristick noticed in the very proclamation of the name of The Lord! Its merely being there would of itself be nearly a sufficient proof that it
is

is repeated with the intention I have suggested: while, if it be compared with the divine judgements which we see in the world, we shall be convinced, that it belongeth unto Him; and that there is a peculiar degree of propriety in the very passage of this law, against which many opponents of revelation have so wisely pointed their objections. For, look to that nation to which this law was particularly given, and in His dealings with it, ye will see this character particularly exemplified. “ But it shall come to pass,” said Moses, “ if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy, and to bring you to nought: and ye shall be plucked off from the land whither thou goest to possess it: and the Lord shall scatter thee among all people from the one end of the earth unto the other; and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest.”


SERM.
III.


That

SERM. That the posterity of these people are
 III. now in the situation thus predicted, we ourselves are eye witnesses ; and we see them still suffering under that visitation of God and His Christ which their forefathers defied, when they denied the Holy One and Just : Him to whom Moses had given them a charge in the name of the Lord, that they should listen on pain of its being required of them, and cried, “ His blood be on us, and on our children.” Or extend your observation to the situation of mankind in general, national or private ; ye will still perceive the judicial inflictions from the Governour of the world reaching unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him.

This ordinance is so deeply imprinted on His works, that in several cases the constitution of the world must be altered to prevent its being executed. Yet it is so executed, that there is no room afforded for the taunting proverb once used by the people of Israel, “ The fathers have eaten four grapes,

grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." For all souls being the Lord's, SERM.
III.
whatever temporary evils any man may meet in the situation in which he is placed under the general administration of Providence, the contending with them is but the duty of his appointed post; and according to his performance of that duty shall be his final lot. We may be able, perhaps, to discover what may be called the natural origin of the sufferings which a wicked man at present undergoes in his father's misconduct; but the unhappiness which he feels from them is due to his own sin, of which, if it prevail on him to repent, and to do that which is lawful and right, in his righteousness which he hath done, he shall live. In like manner, as I before observed, although the evil effects of a wicked ancestor's transgression may yield the particulars of a righteous descendant's probation, yet they operate to a purpose very different from his destruction; for although his ancestor died in his iniquity, he in his righteousness shall surely live. Still the

SERM. menace of the law is executed, and the
III.  hand which ruleth over us appears in the fact of visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation; yielding, although not a singular, yet a strong instance of the unspeakable superiority which revelation manifests in the truth of its statements over the pretended sagacity of such as are forward to carp at those parts of it, the justness of which they cannot immediately descry from their own deficiency in observation, in reasoning, and in information, by proving that had not this, of which they complain as an hard saying, been attributed unto God, one particular of the government of the God of nature would have been omitted to be ascribed unto Jehovah in the Scriptures; and suggesting to every man who may, at any time, find himself inclined to become an objector, to make use of time, consideration and caution, ere he doth so, least it turn only to his own confusion.

For

For ourselves the contemplation of the SERM.
threatning, and of the perpetual execution III.
of it on those who have not entertained an
effectual dread of it, is well calculated to
deter us from trespassing against the Lord
our God.

We none of us would wish to be given over to a reprobate mind, and instead of receiving correction for our offences here, have our punishment reserved to another state, where, if we suffer at all, we must suffer everlastingly. Yet, if our iniquities be visited while we are on earth, in what one method can we be punished without our nearest and dearest connections participating in our sufferings? Bodily sufferings, and mental vexation, are the afflictions the most confined to our own persons, yet in how great measure are men's families involved in the consequences of these! Even without supposing that the uneasiness of a man's mind has the effect of souring his temper, and thereby interrupting the peace, and destroying the comfort of all who dwell with him,

F 2

SERM. him, though this, ye are sensible, be no
III. uncommon case; the visible distress of a
parent will naturally affect, in some degree
or other, the happiness of his children;
and in nearly all cases this distress must
arise from something in which they are in-
terested, and then they partake still further
in the visitation of his iniquities. In those
instances in which men suffer for their
transgressions in their bodily health, their
families do, in like manner, feel a part of
their afflictions, not only where they draw
their support from their parent's labour,
but where still continuing plentifully sup-
plied while he is confined by sickness,
they yet experience much trouble and
anxiety, necessarily occasioned by the help-
less state in which the head of the family
lies. This, however, is considering the
effects of the visitation as confined within
the narrowest limits. Look abroad into the
world, and mark but some of the daily in-
stances which occur, of families plunged into
distress by the transgressions of the heads of
them, of wretchedness entailed on them by
their

their intemperance and iniquities. If, from SERM.
the profligacy of a father, the education of III.
a child be neglected, so that he is unable
to obtain a provision for himself, but is
obliged, having no patrimony to inherit, to
pass his days in penury and dependence,
does he not suffer through his father's
offences? If, through the dissoluteness of a
parent's life, debility of constitution, or
chronical diseases, be entailed on his descen-
dants, from whose trespasses flow all the
miseries which they suffer from pain and
sickness but their parents?

No longer, therefore, let us imagine, that
our breach of any of the divine laws con-
cerns no one but ourselves; but remember,
that when ye disobey the commandments of
the Lord, ye are inflicting a wound upon
the hearts of those whom, in the hours of
cool consideration, ye would pronounce to
be beyond all others dear to you. When
temptation arises, turn your thoughts from
the pleasure that solicits your indulgence to
the evils that may arise from it in the suf-
ferings

SERM. ferings of those whose present innocence,
III. and whose dependence on yourselves plead
for your regard, and cry aloud for your
forbearance. And especially as to the crime
forbidden by this commandment, let the
ceaseless earnestness with which the votaries
of idolatry strive to extend its dominion,
meet, on your part, that vigilance with
which ye should, in wisdom, avoid the in-
dignation of an Almighty Being, Who pro-
fesses Himself jealous of His own honour.
Let the recollection of the charge which all
men have received, to honour the Son even
as they honour the Father, teach you not
to give the glory of Christ to another, by
seeking the mediation of any such with
God, any more than that of the Father by
worshipping another. Neither, on the other
side, omit to recollect the encouragement
holden out in the words of the text, to love
the Lord, and keep His commandments, in
the assurance, that in His faithful servants
He sheweth mercy unto thousands. An
instance of this most transcendently glorious
hath He given in providing a Saviour for
the

the whole human race, in the family of SERM.
faithful Abraham: by following whose III.
example, and separating ourselves from the
corruptions prevailing around us, we may
draw down the divine blessing on our de-
scendants and connections, and cause our-
selves, in some measure, to be conformed to
the image of our Master, in Whom all the
families of the earth are blessed.

SERMON IV.

ON PERJURY AND PROFANE SWEARING.

MATT. v. 33, 34, 35, 36.

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

FREQUENTLY do we hear much dis- SERM.
approbation and regret expressed at the IV.
multitude of oaths which the laws of our
country now require to be taken, and the
increase

SERM. encrease annually added to that multitude,
 IV. as well as at the irreverend manner in which
 they are administered: and just is the censure thus expressed, and important the reasons against rendering thus common what ought to produce the deepest impression. But such censure can come with little grace, such reasons can have but little weight from the mouth of any one who refrains not to appeal to Heaven on every trifling occasion, and challenge the divine vengeance on himself if he perform not actions the most trivial. Here may we use the apostle's mode of reasoning: Thou who sayest the solemnity of an oath ought not to be profaned, dost thou swear commonly? Thou who teachest that men ought, with reverence, to appeal to the judgement of God, dost thou call for the exercise of it at every turn in conversation? True it is, that the danger of perjury is greatly encreased by the multiplication of oaths, and the dread of the justice of God much lessened by such repeated appeals unto it as are now made not only in every court of justice, but
 in

in every office of the revenue. But is there SERM.
less danger of your committing this sin IV.
when your whole discourse is replete with
oaths, or does not your calling for the
curses of God on yourself, and all around
you, demonstrate, that the just awe of them
is already rooted out of *your* mind?

The consideration of these questions will disclose to us the ground of that amplification of the third commandment, which our Lord gave in the words of the text. He knew how much men are disposed to restrain the meaning of a law within the narrowest compass, and take a proportionate latitude in their practice; persuading themselves, that by the breach of a formal oath alone can they be implicated in the guilt of taking the Lord's name in vain; and He hath given us a lesson which will meet all those futile pleas by which men endeavour to evade the charge of criminality, when censured for the profane introduction of any kind of oath on common or trifling occasions. It is the application of this
5 lesson

SERM. lesson to practices most shamefully disgraceful to those who call Christ their Master, that I mean to make the business of the present discourse.

IV.

Now the guilt of the crime before us, in all its various degrees, from deliberate perjury to wanton swearing, arises from the nature of an oath; the taking of which is, in reality, an act of religion, being an appeal to God, as to Him before whom all hearts are open, and Who, through His almighty power, is able, and by His essential justice is inclined, to punish deceit and falsehood: part, or the whole of which perfections, are impliedly, and blasphemously denied by any one, who calls Him to witness a promise or an assertion which is false. Consider, therefore, the extreme presumption of a creature, who dares to deny the perfection of the Creatour of all! Is this, indeed, any thing less than mocking at His power, than challenging Him to manifest His justice? Do but once infix in your minds this true notion of perjury, and

and it will be easy to conceive the enormity SERM.
of those commissions of it, which are so IV.
common that we cease to shudder at them,
and are more than half disposed to allow
the justice of the pleas set up in their de-
fence.

I have not, indeed, heard that any one
has yet been sufficiently hardy to offer any
general defence for those wretches who
willingly forswear themselves in a court of
justice: the justification of this crime is,
perhaps, never undertaken but before the
companions of it. But is it the same with
those oaths which are taken in the course
of trade, or to qualify those who take them
for an office? Yet is the Almighty called
on as the Avenger of those who swear
falsely in these cases at all less than He is in
the former? Or is He to be mocked and
imposed on by a quibble? Is not coming
before Him otherwise than in singleness of
heart, than in purity of purpose, an abomi-
nation, an insult? and will this diminish
the guilt of perjury? When the fraudulent
merchant,

SERM. merchant, to evade the custom due, swears
IV. to the truth of a false entry, or feigned
transport of his goods, What idea can he entertain of that Being whose name he thus takes in vain, if he imagine He will hold him guiltless? Must he not, in the language of holy writ, think Him even such an one as His self? For if he conceive that He has wisdom to penetrate his duplicity, and justice to punish it; if he apprehend that God will reprove him, and set before him the things which he hath done; Is he not rushing, with his eyes open, into misery with which he must dearly pay for the small pittance he saves, by pledging his salvation for a lie? Or will the miserable subterfuge of employing another, ignorant of the truth, to take the oath at which his self trembles, avail to conceal his iniquity from the eye of Heaven? Is not the sacred name of the Lord still used to give credit to a falsity; and advantage taken of the solemnity of an appeal to God to carry on, undiscovered, a fraud upon those who believe in Him?

But

But the words of the text have respect SERM.
not only to oaths concerning things already IV.
done, but to vows and promises of deeds
yet future. These, it was said, even to
those of old time, that they must keep;
and how may such among them who did
so, rise up in judgement against those who,
under a purer dispensation, with more
knowledge, and against stronger sanctions,
make light of the engagements which they
have called upon the Lord to witness!

Every man who is sworn into an office,
formally appeals to his Creatour for the
fidelity with which he will discharge the
duties of it; and every one who takes an
oath of allegiance to his sovereign does the
same as to the sincerity with which he per-
forms that obligation. Yet how little do
we think of the solemnity of these engage-
ments when the day of entering into them
is over! This forgetfulness is not confined
to those who, with no other purpose than
that of reaping the emoluments flowing
from it, intrude themselves into any pub-
lick

SERM. lick employment they can, and then care


IV. not how the duties are neglected, provided
 they continue to enjoy the honours, or receive the profits of it; these deserve not the warning: but there are who would reflect with horror on the commission of perjury, yet appear to live in total insensibility of that perpetual breach of their vows, of which they are guilty in not conforming to the engagements into which they entered when their offices were conferred on them. Hence, in no small measure, are derived that relaxation of vigilance often complained of in publick offices; the corruption of discipline in our army and navy, which has once brought the nation to the brink of ruin; and the dilatoriness of procedure, which the suitors in our courts of law find, protracts their causes to an immoderate length; and what is more to be lamented than all, hence springs that inattention to the manner in which they perform their sacred duties, too often observable in the parochial clergy, by which, in lieu of procuring a full attendance at their churches,
 they

they do, by their uninteresting discourses, the unskilfulness of their reading, or their own irregularity of attendance, and apparent want of devotion, cause, in their parishioners, a backwardness to resort to assemblies where they meet with so much to displease, until they entirely lose the habit of repairing to the congregation, and thus either become a prey to sectaries and fanatics, or gradually lose all sense of religion, and sink both themselves and their families from (what, had they been duely attended to in the ministration of religious instruction, they perhaps might have continued through life) sober christians, into little better than pests of society. Let it not, however, be thought that the incumbent or curates of the church are the only officers of a parish to whom such forgetfulness of their engagements may be objected. Most flagrant are what (might in many cases be called) the annual perjuries of churchwardens, who being yearly officers, have not even to plead the poor excuse, that the obligations they entered into are, through length

SERM.

IV.

SERM. of time, obliterated from their memories ;

IV.  yet not unfrequently set an example of the very neglect it is one duty of their office to censure ; that of attending the assemblies of the church. Does it not then behove these, and all others, who enter on their employments with a solemn appeal to God, to visit their unfaithfulness in the discharge of them, to recollect in how deep guilt they are implicated, when they thus cast behind them the remembrance of their oaths ? Nor is this point least deserving of the attention of those who are liable to be called to determine on the guilt or innocence of others in the capacity of jurors, since experience proves that it is possible for men standing in these characters, entirely to forget the oath they have taken but a few hours before, and shut their eyes to truths that every bye-stander can descry.

As to the other case I mentioned, in which men think so little of the solemnity of the engagement into which they have entered, when they have sworn to pay true
allegiance

allegiance to their sovereign, surely the SERM.
guilt of the perjuries thus committed is not IV.
forgotten in the terrifick judgements we
see poured on the nations, who have re-
belled against those whose authority they
had promised on their oaths to respect.
How many thousands in the neighbouring
countries of France and Ireland have been
sent to their account with this crime upon
their heads ! and what do they not suffer
who yet continue on earth involved in guilt
and misery ! Should not, then, these things
be an admonition to all in this country who
have begun to sin after their example ? For
were they all (from those who are fully
engaged in the conspiracy, to destroy every
valuable in the country, to those who from
vanity, ignorance, folly, or private pique,
promote by their influence, or conversation,
the cause of sedition,) to reflect that they
are absolutely breaking the vows they have
made before the Lord, and trampling under
feet the oath by which they have bound
themselves to behave as faithful subjects,
(which fidelity must at least include, obedi-
ence,

SERM. ence, attachment, and respect,) Could they,
 IV. (unless their hearts are hardened by judicial
 infatuation) without self reproach, and all
 the miseries of minds self-condemned, and
 expecting the reward of their iniquities,
 continue to disregard the solemn engagements
 into which they have entered, and
 impiously dare His vengeance, Who will
 not hold them guiltless that take His holy
 name in vain?


It is not, however, even an equal portion
 of mankind who are exposed to temptation,
 to break oaths taken in the course of trade,
 or those of office; yet no small number of
 the others are chargeable with the crime of
 transgressing the commandment referred to
 in the text. For what is calling God to
 witness, what are vows made in terms as
 strong as language can supply, which are
 not followed by a performance of the things
 promised, but taking the name of the Lord
 in vain? Neither are the excuses commonly
 made for these profane exclamations of any
 worth: "I did not mean any harm," it is
 said,

said, or “ I was only in jest.” Can the SERM.
name of the Sovereign of the universe be IV.
trifled with without harm? Or is God to
be called on to witness a jest? Let not,
therefore, the phrases, “ I declare to God,
I vow to God,” and the like, have any
place in your common discourse: but re-
membering, that by your words ye are to
be justified, and by your words ye are to be
condemned, keep yourselves innocent from
offences which, however trifling they may
appear to a corrupted world, will be re-
quired at the day of judgement.

But if these inadvertent asseverations be
thus criminal, what, ye will say, is to be
thought of the still more, much more
shocking practice of common swearing?
To this it must be replied, that since, ac-
cording to the observation of Solomon,
“ in the multitude of words there wanteth
not sin,” in the multitude of oaths there
must be a still greater abundance thereof.
For as falsehood is that of which there is
the most imminent danger in many words,

SERM. so in many oaths the danger of lying is at
 IV. once changed into that of perjury. For
 this last is the crime specifically committed
 when God is appealed to for the confirma-
 tion of any thing which is not true.

Neither is it solely when His holy name is mentioned that the Lord is appealed to, our blessed Saviour has taught us that swearing by any thing sacred to Him is, in fact, swearing by Him. “ Whoſo, therefore, ſhall ſwear by the altar, ſweareth by it, and by all things thereon; and whoſo ſhall ſwear by the temple, ſweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. And he that ſhall ſwear by heaven, ſweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that ſitteth thereon.” Ingenious, indeed, do ſome men ſhew themſelves in deviſing oaths, hoping thereby to eſcape the guilt of perjury, be-
 cauſe what they ſwear by is a thing of nought. But ſwearing being an act of religion, to perform it before any other than the true God, is giving the honour due unto Him to another; and that too, in an in-
 ſtance

stance especially noticed by the prophets. SERM.
Thus Ifaiah states it to be a purpose of God's IV.
correction of the people of Judah, " that 
he who bleffeth himself in the earth, shall
blefs himself by the God of truth ; and he
that fwareth in the earth, shall swear by
the God of truth." And Amos threatened
those who swore by idols thus : " They
that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say,
Thy God, O Dan, liveth ; and the manner
of Beerfheba liveth ; even they shall fall,
and never rife up again." And by Zepha-
niah the Lord threatened " to cut off them
that swore by the Lord, and that swore by
Malchom." Futile, therefore, is the plea
ufed in thefe cafes, that the name of God
is not taken in vain ; and well does the
authour of the book of Wifdom argue
in the parallel instance of thofe who swear
wittingly by idols. " For," faith he, " in-
fomuch as their trust is in idols, which
have no life, though they swear falſely, yet
they look not to be hurt. Howbeit, for
both cauſes ſhall they be juſtly puniſhed :
both becauſe they thought not well of God,

G 4

giving

SERM. giving heed unto idols, and also unjustly
 V. swore in deceit, despising holiness. For it
 is not the power of them by whom they
 swear, but it is the just vengeance of sin-
 ners, that punisheth always the offence of
 the ungodly." (Wisd. xiv. 29, 30, 31.)

Now if this be the case, as it most surely
 is, What may they dread who expose them-
 selves to this vengeance in the most daring
 manner, sanctioning the most trifling things
 they utter by an oath! Or, if when men
 swear falsely by a thing of nought, they
 shall be punished even for the falsity of their
 oaths, how much more shall they so when
 they swear by Him to whom this power of
 punishment belongs? Yet are there multi-
 tudes who swear so much, that "their
 talk maketh the hair stand upright, and
 their brawls make one stop his ears." Nor
 is the crime confined to either age or de-
 gree: children who can scarcely lisp their
 own names, are taught by the sad example
 of their parents to profane that of their
 Maker: and not only those whose deplorable
 ignorance

ignorance might lead a favourable inter-
preter of their conduct to think, that they
know not what they do, but even many
who have information enough to make them
sensible of all the guilt of what they utter,
scarcely go through a single sentence with-
out mocking at the Majesty of Him before
whose throne the most glorious beings in
Heaven fall prostrate, and at whose name
every knee should bow. Nay, so widely
hath this transgression spread, that some of
those who are entrusted with the adminis-
tration of the human laws that exist against
it, are, to their shame, guilty of the com-
mission; and thus what should be repressed
by authority, is countenanced by those who
bear that authority.

Yet what is the temptation to this great
offence? Can there be pleasure in shocking
the ears of the sober, or corrupting the
conversation of the innocent? Is alarming
the fears of the religious for your future
doom a mark of courage? or not knowing
that there is a judgement to come, a proof
of

SERM.

IV.

SERM. of learning? Is endeavouring to emulate
 IV. the lowest of mankind in a vicious practice to which the coarseness of their uncorrected manners particularly disposes them, a sign of liberal education, or an evidence of polite breeding? Or is disgusting the serious, and drawing on yourselves the contempt of the well-informed, and really polished members of society, a testimony of good sense?

Those who are guilty of this most unreasonable and impious practice, are wont to urge in their defence, sometimes natural warmth of temper, sometimes an unconquerable force of habit: of the first of which pleas it may justly be said, that it is invalid; of the other, that the thing advanced in defence is, in fact, an aggravation of the crime. For if your heat of temper continue so uncorrected that you are not at times sufficiently master of yourself to restrain your tongue from wickedness, to whose charge is this fault to be laid but to your own, who have not yet acquired that
 self-

self-restraint which it is your duty to possess? SERM.
And if it be from habit that you sin, with IV.
what obstinacy must you have continued in
the repetition of this offence to be insensible
of your own commission of it! Shall,
then, the effect of this obstinacy be ad-
mitted as a plea for the pardon of it? Or
in what page of the Gospel do you find it
written, that a man may be forgiven, and
yet retain the offence? Be not deceived;
God is not thus mocked! If you be sin-
cerely desirous of breaking through a prac-
tice you are conscious is offensive to Him,
your regret at finding yourself unable so to
do, will urge you immediately to suppli-
cate, with most humble earnestness, the
assistance of Him who alone can give you
the power you want; and such sincere sup-
plication His mercy will never reject. And
consequently, on the purity of your own in-
tentions, on the integrity with which you
yourselves behave, depends your deliver-
ance from the bondage of this sin. Let,
therefore, this honesty of intention, this
fairness of mind, be manifested in your
efforts

SERM. efforts for deliverance from habits of profane speech, whatever may be the phrases you are accustomed to use.

IV.

I have now said whatever be the phrases, because some of the most shocking that can be employed, are sometimes heard from the mouths of persons who appear ignorant of their meaning. Such are those in which the blood and wounds of the divine Saviour of the world are sworn by in an abridged term for God's blood; God's wounds; and God's life: for what can be more disgusting to the ears of a Christian, who looks to his Saviour with love and reverence, what more adverse to the piety and gratitude he feels, than that the blood by which he is cleansed, the wounds by which he is healed, or the life which was laid down for him, should be lightly mentioned to signify the surprize, or express the passion raised by objects common or unclean! A similar observation may be made on the very reprehensible practice of pledging the faith of a Christian on occasions the most trivial;

trivial: for, in reality, what do we more SERM.
than this when we swear in the most solemn IV.
manner, and, with the Holy Gospel in our
hands, attest the truth of what we utter?

In fine, to preserve ourselves innocent in all the points before us, it is absolutely necessary that we comply with the precept of our Lord in the text, and “Swear not at all.” Indeed, to do so in any manner, implies a confession of what is highly dishonourable to ourselves, since he who cannot gain credit to his assertions but under the sanction of an oath, must have given strong proofs of his want of general adherence to the truth: and until a man has, by his conduct, taught others to disbelieve him, he will be under no temptation to transgress the commandment of his Saviour, but may let his Yea be Yea, and his Nay, Nay.

Before I finish, it is proper to observe, that no small part of the profane speeches of the common swearer consists of curses
rather

SERM. rather than of oaths, and betrays not only


IV. irreverence towards God, but malice and
bitterness towards men: this interpretation, indeed, the guilty often protest against; but can the tenderness of his mind remain unblunted who can utter execrations without being sensible of their meaning? These imprecations, you would further say, are as often directed against the utterer himself as against another. True: but do not those who accustom themselves to call for the vengeance of God on themselves, or those they converse with, grow less sensible of the terrors of that vengeance, and more bold in daring the danger of it? And after all the feeble attempts of the weak or the wicked to defend this practice, Can the heart that suggests curses be pure, or the tongue that utters them be innocent? As this consideration should be impressed on every mind, so should it to some be strengthened by an admonition, that with that tenderness of heart, and delicacy of sentiment, which we more especially expect in one sex, the use of curses in any shape, or under
any

any form of words, is totally inconsistent ; SERM.
and that boldness in guilt, which shocks us IV.
in a man, does, in a female, appear doubly
disgusting.

Let not, however, what I have now said of the indelicacy of a woman's cursing and swearing weaken your recollection of what has been before repeated concerning the criminality of the practice. Ye have seen that it leads to the enormous crime of perjury, that it contains an insult to the Sovereign of the universe, however ye may endeavour to evade or modify the guilt of it. Consider lastly, then, by whom are these daring speeches uttered, these great words used? This is a question suggested to us by the last words of the text: "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black." The experience we have of our own impotence should, in all reason, produce in us humility and caution ; but we abandon both when we take all restraint from our tongues,
and,

SERM. and, as far as in our power, use the Lord's

IV. Heaven for thunder.



The instances we have repeatedly heard of men's suddenly dying while uttering passionate expressions, supply a fearful admonition not to risque ourselves in a situation of mind so little fitted to a departure from the world; and, consequently, to strive without delay to subdue any warmth of temper, to the attacks of which we are conscious of being subject, and to check, betimes, any empassioned expressions of which we have most unadvisedly obtained the habit. For this purpose both the enormity of the transgression, and the difficulty of abstaining from it, when we are once accustomed to it, should be seriously pondered on: and more particularly the lessons on this point, given by the wise son of Sirach and St. James the apostle, will, by their effect on any mind not hardened past recovery, fully recompense frequent recollection and earnest attention.

The

The former of these writers gives his SERM.
readers, in the 23d chapter of his collec- IV.
tion, this admirable caution—“ Hear, O
ye children, the discipline of the mouth :
he that keepeth it shall never be taken in
his lips : the sinner shall be left in his fool-
ishness : both the evil speaker and the proud
shall fall thereby. Accustom not thy mouth
to swearing ; neither use thyself to the
naming of the Holy One. For as a servant
that is continually beaten shall not be without
a blue mark ; so he that sweareth, and
nameth God continually, shall not be fault-
less. A man that useth much swearing
shall be filled with iniquity ; and the plague
shall never depart from his house : if he
shall offend, his sin shall be upon him : and
if he acknowledge not his sin, he maketh
a double offence : and if he swear in vain,
he shall not be innocent, but his house shall
be full of calamities. There is a word that
is clothed about with death : God grant
that it be not found in the heritage of
Jacob : for all such things shall be far from
the godly, and they shall not wallow in
VOL. II. H their

SERM. their fins. Use not thy mouth to intemperate swearing, for therein is the word of sin. The man that is accustomed to opprobrious words, will never be reformed all the days of his life." And St. James, in the third chapter of his epistle, writes thus :
 IV. " Behold, we put bits in the horse's mouths that they may obey us ; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth ; even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth ! and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity : so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind : but the tongue can no man tame : it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even

even the Father ; and therewith curse we SERM.
men, which are made after the similitude IV.
of God. Out of the same mouth pro-
ceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren,
these things ought not so to be !”

SERMON V.

ON THE SABBATH.

EXOD. XXXV. 2.

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord.


THESE are the words of Moses to the SERM.
Israelites, enjoining the observance of v.
the Sabbath : not that the Sabbath was of
Moses, but of the fathers. From the crea-
tion of the world was the seventh day hal-
lowed ; and the reason given to the house
of Jacob for keeping it holy, that it might
be a sign between God and themselves, that
they might know that He was the Lord
their God, extends itself to other nations,
as the knowledge of God is gradually dif-

SERM. fused over the earth. Were the children of
V. Israel commanded to sanctify the seventh
day, because on it God rested from all His
work that He had created and made? Are
we less interested in what was thus finished?
Do we taste less of the blessings of creation,
or receive less benefit from the several parts
of the world then ordered into being?
Were they directed to hallow the Sabbath,
as a sign of their being separated from the
rest of the nations, to the service of God?
All who are baptized into Christ, are also
of the Lord's peculiar people: or, lastly,
Was it established as a preventive of apos-
tacy, to preserve them from forgetting Him
their Protector and Patron, and becoming
partakers in the abominations of the people
that surrounded them? We, too, have
need of being frequently reminded, that
here we are but on our way to another,
even an heavenly country; our inheritance
in which we may lose by entangling our-
selves with the affairs of this life. So that
every one of these reasons for dedicating
the seventh day to the duties of devotion,
applies

applies to ourselves with no less force than **SERM.**
to the descendants of Jacob: while the **V.**
utter forgetfulness of this which at present
prevails among multitudes, who lie under
the most urgent obligations effectually to
remember it, and the mischievous conse-
quences of their contagious example, call
for the most serious admonitions against
neglecting that observance, which forms a
distinguishing mark between those who have
renounced, and those who yet retain the
belief of a God.

Let me not, therefore, call in vain for
your attention while I point out the sources
from whence are derived our obligations
religiously to observe the returns of this
day; and shew how the several relations
which we bear to the Lord God, as His
creatures, as the redeemed of His Son, and
as the heirs of His promised kingdom of
happiness, conspire to encrease the guilt of
neglecting a service founded on these rela-
tions.

SERM.

V.


On the first of these points, then, the observance of this day in acknowledgement that ourselves and the world around us received our being from the omnipotent hand of the Lord, it may be fairly asked, Whether, if we had even no further assurance than that of a slight tradition handed down from our forefathers, that God had, at the beginning, commanded mankind thus to commemorate their creation, we could, without base ingratitude, slight the suggestion? For are the benefits which have been thus conferred on us so trivial, that we may justly insist on the most express proof of an acknowledgement being required ere we render it? Or, on the other hand, is the acknowledgement thus called for in itself so great, as to justify our withholding it but under absolute demonstration of its having been authoritatively demanded? Let us investigate these questions in their order!

Here, then, must be taken into the account all the good which God hath done for us: not only the happiness we have experienced,

rienced, and all we do enjoy, but our capacities for future good, since all these are founded on the first gift of existence, which was previously necessary to the rest.

SERM.
v.


Have ye not, then, repeatedly felt the blessings of life sufficiently to cause your hearts to exult in the enjoyment of it? Have not your minds, on particular occasions, been so affected with the bliss ye have tasted, as to pour forth unpremeditated acknowledgements of the goodness of that Being who hath made provision of such happiness for His creatures? Have your thoughts never expatiated on the faculties with which ye are endowed, so admirably adapted to your well being, on the capacity ye have of both recalling the past, and anticipating the future, so as to make them subjects of present pleasure, and draw from them the most beneficial lessons of conduct? Gifted with speech, and having all the social affections implanted in your breasts, Have ye not from society, for which ye are thus peculiarly formed, derived manifold joys,

SERM. joys, and received inestimable advantages ?
V. and in return for all these blessings, What expressions of gratitude shall we think too great to be rendered unto Him, who first breathed into the human nostril the breath of life, and made man a living soul ?

Or, turn your eyes from yourselves to that portion of the creation with which ye are surrounded ; observe the order, the beauty, and the benefits resulting to yourselves from the various parts of the material world. Consider the wisdom and power manifested in adapting the size, the relative situation, and the well-adjusted motions of the earth, and the surrounding bodies, to the production of those periodical changes which are constant without raising disgust, and varied without causing confusion. View the innumerable objects of wonder and delight presented to our sight on the surface of the earth, and in the boundless expanse of the firmament, and recollect that all the necessaries for our support, all the conveniences for our ease and comfort, are ultimately


mately derived from these works of our SERM.
great Creatour.—Then ask yourselves, V.
Whether it becomes us to treat with full en-
inattention an appointment, which, we are
told, was at the first made by Him, in
commemoration of the completion of those
very works in which we so largely partici-
pate? Or, since in acknowledgement of
that appointment, places of worship are
regularly opened, and numbers assemble in
them on this day, Whether we can, with-
out the basest ingratitude, neglect to join
in the public sacrifice of praise and thank-
giving then offered to our first, our greatest,
our constant Benefactor? There may be,
indeed, though such are scarcely present
here, men who feel no gratitude to God
for all they enjoy, to whom expressions of
what His faithful servants experience with
so much joy and exultation in our Creatour,
are unintelligible: but though there be thus,
in every great house, vessels to dishonour as
well as vessels to honour, they are not wont
to be ranged in the same apartment; and it
therefore behoves all who would avoid the
disgraceful

SERM. disgraceful lot of the former, to purge themselves from ingratitude and disobedience, that being sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, they may be prepared unto every *good work*. Yet how can this be done, unless some seasons be set apart for religious meditation and inquiry? Can the impressions which the world and its allurements make on our minds be effaced, or those which the lessons of religion already received have made, be preserved by casually only turning our thoughts to points of seriousness? Will the reflection of a few minutes recover the sobriety of mind lost by dissipation, or restore the dispassionate judgment impaired by the heat of particular pursuits? Or to preserve a proper remembrance of the divine laws, and an effectual sense of their sanctions, is it sufficient to recal them to our recollection at distant intervals only? The daily experience of men proves the contrary of all this; while it manifests, too, that there may be an excess on the contrary part, and that a too frequent recurrence of religious observances, besides
being


being incompatible with those labours which the sentence of His heavenly Lawgiver has made necessary to fallen man, lessens the solemnity, and, consequently, diminishes the beneficial effects thereof; turning impressive rites, that properly regulated would conduce to edification, into familiar and empty ceremonies, yielding a covert to hypocrisy. Between these extremes, therefore, a mean must be pitched on; and who can say, there can be found a nearer point to that than what the institution of the Sabbath affords? Who can say, that as there are now perpetually coming to our knowledge new discoveries in confirmation of the wondrous truths of revelation, it may not soon be discovered, that one day of rest in seven is most adapted to the nature both of the animals man uses in his labour, and of his own body, and best calculated to preserve, by its religious use, that temperate warmth of piety in his breast, that neither bursts out into the flames of enthusiasm, nor dies away into the coldness of vainly-affected philosophy?

All

SERM. All these questions might be put, had
 V. we nothing but a traditionary report for the
 precept to hallow the seventh day ; but, in
 fact, we have more, much more : for it
 having been written by Moses, “ that God
 blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it ;
 because that in it He had rested from all
 His works, which God created and made.”
 All the miraculous evidence of the law and
 the Gospel becomes testimony in proof of
 the divine origin of this observance ; and
 we know that the wisdom of the Creatour
 Himself hath assigned to the human race
 this sabbatical period for rest and reflection.
 How then shall we appreciate the presump-
 tion of those who slight, and much more
 that of those who have altered this period ?
 For however infatuated wretches may pre-
 tend not to believe ; (and mere pretence it
 is in most of those who are not involved
 in the utter darkness of French ignorance,
 their hearts shuddering at the vengeance
 which their tongues defy, and therefore I
 say) however they may, in the height of
 their absurdity, pretend not to believe the
 sacred

sacred writings, as they have no positive SERM.
evidence to oppose to the ancient assertion V.
of this institution being divine, they must, 
by wilfully venturing on the chance of
counteracting an injunction of their Crea-
tour on a subject so particular, at best con-
tract the guilt of ingratitude for His first
gift of life, for all the blessings since re-
ceived, all their capacities of improvement,
and their means of happiness. Nay, they
must, by virtually denying the obligations
of creatures, in reality deny the existence
of their Creatour, and through their con-
duct assert, what their predecessors in folly
said in their hearts, "There is no God!"

Hitherto I have considered the seventh
day as sanctified only in remembrance of
the world being created by God: but as, in
addition to this, the Israelites were com-
manded to keep it holy as a sign between
the Lord and them, that they might know
He was the Lord who sanctified them, so
by us Christians it is further to be con-
sidered, as what it is called by the great
apostle

SERM. apostle St. John, the Lord's Day. That
v. the first disciples of our blessed Saviour
 should be guided by the wisdom which
they received from above, to fix not on the
annual, not on the monthly, but on the
weekly return of that day on which their
divine Master triumphed over Death, to be
observed in commemoration of the glorious
event, is a circumstance which, though
little noticed, furnishes a strong instance of
the uniformity of the divine dispensations.
For simply by this appointment the pri-
mæval institution of the Sabbath was not
only in its substance retained, and a seventh
day's rest given to men and to cattle, but as
at the Exodus the day of observance had
been removed to the sixth day of the week,
the patriarchal sabbath was now again re-
stored, all subjugation to the Jewish ritual
law was avoided, and no further burthen
was laid on the Gentiles than to commemo-
rate those blessings in which they partake
equally with the lineal descendants of Jacob,
creation and redemption. And can there
be any who acknowledge they have re-
ceived

ceived these, yet are backward to express **SERM.**
their gratitude for them? Can there be any ^{v.}
who think abstaining from the prosecution
of amusement, or of gain, during one day
in seven, too great a sacrifice to be offered
in acknowledgement of that love by which
we may, if we will, be rescued from the
dominion of sin, and be redeemed from the
curse of death?

Many there are, it must be acknowledged,
whose conduct speaks this language; whose
more than careless inattention, their pre-
sumptuous neglect of the duties of this day
apparently declares, that they esteem the
mercies of God, the mediation of Christ,
and the prospect of everlasting life of little
worth. Yet I think it may be asserted, that
the behaviour of no small portion of these
simple ones, however indefensible in itself,
proceeds from being misled either by an ill
conducted education, a weak imitation of
what is commonly called the fashionable
world, that is, the profligate part of the
great, or by some other cause, from ever
VOL. II. I seriously

SERM. seriously considering on the one hand, how
 V. absolutely inconsistent with christianity the
 not attending the assemblies of the church
 is, and on the other, of how little avail can
 be the mere form of attendance that is not
 followed by a suitable behaviour, which
 behaviour would preclude every employ-
 ment unbecoming the solemnity of the sea-
 son. Where such is the real cause of
 neglect, as I should hope in many instances
 such it is, the minds of the guilty could
 hardly remain unaffected on hearing the
 sentiments which the great apostle of the
 Gentiles has expressed in his epistle to the
 Hebrews on the subject. Far from deem-
 ing it a point of slight importance, he ap-
 pears to consider neglect of the church as
 but immediately preceding absolute apostacy
 from christianity. Hear his own words :
 “ Let us hold fast the profession of our
 faith without wavering ; (for He is faithful
 that promised) and let us consider one ano-
 ther to provoke unto love and to good
 works : *not forsaking the assembling our-
 selves together, as the manner of some is ;*
but

but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." Here, ye see, the apostle not only recommends the assembling ourselves together as a preventive of declining from the faith, but strongly intimates, that the neglect of it is, in itself, indicative of approaching apostacy; and what in its own nature is it less? To acknowledge and to confirm our faith in God and Christ, are purposes for which we meet in the church; and do not those who will not resort thither neglect both these as of little moment? And how far is this removed from treading under foot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of Grace? It is plain, from the words of St. Paul, that he considered Christians, in their solemn assemblies, as not only commemorating past blessings, but anticipating that scene of glory which shall burst on the

SERM.
v.

I 2

faithful


SERM. faithful followers of Christ at the appearance of their Lord, and as mutually drawing encouragement from them to obey the command they had received from the very personage they expect, and be like unto servants waiting for their master. What, then, is wilful absence from such assemblies but a declaration of indifference as to that blessed hope, and the appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; a breach of the charge of our Master, a renunciation of the prospect of Christians? If any man conceive, that the rewards of the Gospel are not worth his seeking, that the remuneration promised to the true disciples of Jesus is not equal to what he should in this world forfeit by behaving as a member of the church, let him take his portion where he has chosen it: but let it not be imagined, that any who have not been careful to act as followers of Christ in this world, shall be crowned as such in the next; that any who have been backward to profess themselves members of His church in its despised state on earth, can in justice

justice be acknowledged members of it in SERM.
its triumphant state in the Heavens. Judge v.
of this yourselves : Is the offer of everlast-
ing life in the Holy Scriptures made to us
on terms so humble as to leave men at
liberty to trifle with it and yet secure it?
Or can the insolent coldness of the negli-
gent, and the humble zeal of the devout,
be in equity recompensed with equal appro-
bation? If not, the publick and pious pro-
fession of christianity is by no means matter
of indifference ; and a regular attendance
on the assemblies of the church being one
of the strongest as well as of the most
proper modes of making this profession, to
give such attendance becomes the indispen-
sable duty of every believer. And if this
duty be discharged with seriousness and
sincerity, the impression thereby made on
the minds of the worshippers will hardly
suffer them to be betrayed during the hours
of the Sabbath which are not employed in
the church, into any behaviour unbecoming
the day of solemn assembly. For this, in
common with the other characteristics of a

SERM. Christian possesses the advantage of becoming more distinct and more honourable, the more faith and piety are diminished from among men—more distinct, because the fewer there are who bear it, the more remarkable must be the distinction—more honourable, because in proportion to the encrease of gainfayers, the sincerity and the fortitude of the believer must undergo severer trials. Herein, then, behold both a reason for the admonition I am giving you, and a motive for you to receive it. How flagrantly the assemblies of the church are neglected, how shamelessly the solemnity of this day is profaned, I need not state to you. These facts speak but too plainly for themselves, and declare that the religious belief of the nation is affected. This circumstance, indeed, is, to our adversaries, matter of glorying, while with their wonted falsehood and effrontery, they attribute it to the additional light the present age has gained. But if that were the case, the encrease of knowledge should have produced something to oppose to the facts on which
our

our faith is grounded ; instead of which, SERM.
by the enquiries of late made in the eastern V.
part of the globe, the ancient history of
revelation is most admirably confirmed, and
by the whole course of events throughout
the earth, those prophecies which were
given us to be as a light shining in a dark
place, and proofs of the divine commission
of those who penned them, have hitherto
regularly met their completion, and, by the
present extent of it, announce the near ap-
proach of that grand consummation to
which they all point. The evidence of re-
ligion, therefore, is encreased instead of
lessened, and the growth of unbelief must be
traced to another source, even that assigned
to it by an apostle in a former case, when
he spake of some who, having put away a
good conscience, concerning faith had made
shipwreck. When men are conscious to
themselves that they live contrary to the
laws of God, they necessarily dislike to
come where those laws are repeated, and
the punishments due to transgressors are set
before them. Hence the church becomes

SERM. unpleasant to those who do not like to forsake practices inconsistent with the precepts of the Gospel; and when a man once begins to desert it, he soon proceeds to justify that desertion by attacking the truths on which resort is made to it. And when such desertion and such attacks become common, the danger of an evil of which we have even by our Lord Himself been warned, that through the abounding of iniquity the love of many will wax cold, calls on all who yet continue in the faith to look to themselves, to recollect the reasons of the belief that is in them, and consider the rewards that await those who remain steadfast to the end. Let not, therefore, the statement I have this day laid before you of our obligations as creatures of God, to hallow the Sabbath, as the redeemed of Christ, to observe the Lord's Day, and, as heirs of everlasting life, to assemble ourselves together for edification against the awful hour which is fast approaching, pass without its due effect. Remember, that in calling you to struggle faithfully against the torrent of
vice

vice and infidelity that threatens now more SERM.
than at any former period to overwhelm V.
the land, I do no more than repeat the 
apostle's exhortation, to bear hardship like
the good soldiers of Christ; and if ye find
this a task of trouble, it is no more than
that of which your Lord hath forewarned
His disciples, "in the world ye shall have
tribulation;" while, whatever ye thus un-
dergo, will naturally and of necessity tend
to augment the enjoyment of that *everlasting*
Sabbath which remaineth for the people of
God!

The more proudly your adversaries here
triumph over you, the more they affect to
despise you for trusting in that holy name,
the more scoffs ye receive, the greater re-
proach ye bear for Christ's sake, the more
complete will be your praise, the higher
your honour, the brighter your glory, when
that Sovereign, whose throne no treason
shakes, whose power no rebellion can affect,
shall appear to reward His servants accord-
ing to their works.

SER-

SERMON VI.

ON THE BEHAVIOUR BECOMING THE PLACE
AND HOUR OF PRAYER.

PSALM XXIX. 2.

*Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His
name: worship the Lord in the beauty of
holiness.*

MY last address to you being chiefly SERM.
employed in endeavouring to impress VI.
on your minds the duty of hallowing the
Sabbath, and that of a regular attendance
on the assemblies of the church, I could in
it no more than transiently touch on that
particular mode of passing a day which is
consistent with sanctifying it, or on the be-
haviour becoming those who appear in the
con-

SERM. congregation of the Lord : the consideration
VI. of these points I shall therefore now resume,
and viewing the exhortations of the text as applicable to them, enquire before you, How the hours of this holy day may be spent so as to render to the Lord the glory due unto His name? And how we may join in devotion with the brethren, so as to worship Him in the beauty of holiness?

The portions into which we may first consider this day as divided, are that which is passed in the church, and that which is otherwise consumed; I shall first speak of the former of these.

Has it not then been too hastily objected, that the attendance required on our publick worship is unreasonably long? For out of the twelve hours of the day, how many are really employed in rendering this just homage to our Creatour? May it not truly be replied, At the utmost, four? these too include all that are passed in prayer and praise, in hearing the Holy Scriptures
publickly

publickly read, and in listening to the words of exhortation, grounded thereon: and are, moreover, divided into the morning and evening services. Now what great warmth of devotion, what zealous attachment to acts of piety does it require to preserve the mind from distraction or fatigue during the portions into which this whole period is divided? Or can any one, who entertains just sentiments of the Being to whom he is then rendering publick homage, suffer himself to fall into that unbecoming lassitude which bespeaks a forgetfulness of where he is, and wherefore he is come there? That such a forgetfulness does not seldom betray itself, I need scarcely remind you; ye would much more willingly hear by what means ye can preserve yourselves against it, and keep the flame of your devotion from dying away ere the service in which ye are met to join is concluded. As conducive to this end, then, let me recommend to you to strive by reflection on the greatness, the majesty, and the perfection of Him before Whom ye assemble, to raise in your minds those

SERM.

VI.

SERM. those sentiments which are suitable to the
 VI. place and hour of prayer ; and by attending
 to the meaning of, and connection between
 the several parts of our church service, endeavour so to interest yourselves in what is doing through every part of it, that ye may not think its duration tedious.

To contribute what in me lies to each of the particulars I have thus recommended, I shall, in this and some subsequent discourses, after stating to you such observations as I would hope might raise in your breast some portion of those affections with which we ought to approach the throne of Heaven, lay before you some remarks on the several parts of our morning and evening prayers.

But when wishing to raise mine own as well as your minds to the contemplation of our great Creatour, Where shall I begin? Surrounded with proofs of His power, encompassed with ensigns of His Majesty, beholding numberless testimonies of His goodness, and existing only by His mercy,
 to


to what particular shall I first call your at-
tention? All the various parts of nature
are but instruments in the hand of the
the Lord, formed for the accomplishment
of His pleasure: to borrow the language
of holy writ, they are His ministers ful-
filling His word; and as the strength and
number of their armies will afford us some
notion of the power of earthly kings, so
from the contemplation of the irresistible
force of these His hosts, we may arrive at
the best judgement we can form (for a com-
plete one we never can make) of the mighti-
ness of His power, whose kingdom ruleth
over all.

It is the force of the thunder which is
chiefly dwelt on in the psalm from whence
the words on which I am speaking are
chosen. Nor does that part of the creation
which is within the reach of human eye,
afford a more awful testimony of the divine
supremacy. View the majesty with which
a storm ariseth: consider its effects when it
rageth: adopt, for a moment, the Hebrew
phrase-

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VI.

SERM. phraseology : Listen to the thunder as to

VI.  the voice of the Lord ; regard the lightning as His arrows, and your hearts will tremble at them.—“ Hear attentively the noise of His voice, and the sound that goeth out of His mouth. He directeth it under the whole Heaven, and His lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth : He thundereth with the voice of His excellency : God thundereth marvellously with His voice.” (Job xxxvii. 2—5.) “ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters : the God of glory thundereth : the Lord is upon many waters : the voice of the Lord is powerful : the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars : yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire : the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness : the voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve.” (Pf. xxix. 3—8.) Recollect the fearful suddenness with which the lightning striketh. Philosophy may boast of her attainments, but when His terrors are abroad, the little security

security she can afford will only verify His SERM.
prophet's words, that "He confoundeth VI.
the wisdom of the wise, and maketh the
diviners mad." And when ye have called
to mind the tremendous scenes often exhibited by these, apply your hearts to consider the greatness of that Being, by whose word they were created, and to whose nod they are obedient.

From this portion of His Majesty, seen when He maketh the clouds His chariot, and rideth upon the wings of the wind, go on and survey that more extended scene of grandeur which presents itself in the firmament, glittering with unnumbered stars: view these, though from their distance appearing so small to us, as being in themselves large as the sun, and, in all probability, being really other suns, affording light to numberless other worlds not hence discernible through so vast a space. Reflect, moreover, that had we power to visit the farthest removed of these, we might thence, perhaps, descry as many others

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SERM. rising on our sight, and whichever way we
 VI. pursued our search, find still beyond the
 ~~~~~ remoteſt point we could reach worlds yet  
 unviſited, the habitations of beings formed  
 by the power, and ſupported by the providence  
 of the ſame Lord our God.

And when ye have thus endeavoured to gain juſter and more exalted ideas of His greatneſs, when ye have conſidered how far beyond all imagination excellent and wonderful muſt be that almighty Sovereign, who made, upholds, and governs all theſe things, aſk yourſelves what homage is due unto Him? with what ſentiments His creatures ought to come before Him? Minds employed in reflections like to theſe I have ſuggeſted, could ſcarcely, I conceive, on contemplating the immeaſurable diſtance between their Creatour and themſelves, fail to exclaim in terms ſimilar to thoſe of the pſalmiſt, “ Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of Him! or the ſon of man, that Thou viſiteſt him!”



Indeed, some superficial reasoners, over-  
looking the most evident facts, and ascribing  
to the Deity the impotence of man, have,  
from the same premisses, argued, that One  
so high must be indifferent to the conduct  
of beings who are as nothing in respect of  
Him; and since this generation is not yet  
extinct, it may fitly be observed, that our  
very existence proves that God did not deem  
it derogatory from His dignity to create us;  
and wherefore conclude, that He would  
make creatures capable of being governed,  
whom yet it was below Him to govern?  
Such a conclusion would be nearly as absurd  
in itself as it is contradictory to what hourly  
passes in the world, where the justice and  
righteousness of God are perpetually mani-  
fested in the manner in which the various  
courses of vice bring punishment on those  
who are guilty of them.

Yet much to be condemned as such rea-  
soners are, reproofs no less severe are due  
to those who, acknowledging that God ob-  
serves our ways, retain not on their minds

SERM. that just awe of Him, which alone will  
VI. ensure our worshipping Him with humility,  
and rejoicing before Him with reverence. Such is the insensibility to the difference between things sacred and common that has pervaded the breasts of many Christians, that the appearance of religion among us is deformed by it; and our negligent and unbecoming behaviour seems to declare, that we imagine the less veneration we manifest toward God, the greater love we shew for Him. Yet our blessed Saviour's words, that "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth," will teach us the proper mode of reasoning on this point. For thus may we argue; "God is holy, and holy therefore should be the service paid to Him." The rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law were but the shadow of things to come, from whence it has been concluded, that real religion has little concern with external service. But as there can be no shadow without a substance, the ablutions, various purifications, and the great attention enjoined therein,

therein, lest a man should appear before the Lord under any uncleanness, form to us lessons of demeaning ourselves with as much reverence toward Him outwardly, as we have sincere devotion for Him in our hearts.

SERM.  
VI.

The primary signification of holy is that of being removed, or separate from all contamination; and therefore, in Scripture, holy and common are put in contradistinction to each other; and that part of the temple into which none were to enter but the high priest, and even he but once in a year, was called the holy of holies. Now if we retain this general sense of the term, it will necessarily follow, that the performance of divine worship, and whatsoever relateth to it, should be kept distinct, and a separation made between them, and all other things: and though the deduction may but ill accord with the corruptions and practices of the age, yet if ye look into the word of truth, and endeavour, by a little calm and just reasoning, to investigate the subject, ye will soon perceive how reprehensible is the


SERM. manner in which the places consecrated to  
 VI. the service of God are, in this country,  
 ~~~~~ treated, the little reverence with which they  
 are approached, and the very unseemly behaviour of many who enter the congregation.

It is true, our minds are ever open unto God, and he knoweth our thoughts long before ; but as no man of common understanding would assert, that it therefore does not behove us to keep them from distraction, or our imaginations from roving when we address ourselves to Him in prayer ; so, though the Almighty be every where present, though through His Spirit He dwelleth with the good, no one can reasonably affirm, that places particularly appointed for His worship can be properly approached but with minds possessed by suitable affections. And what affections can we justly esteem such ? Surely those alone which may be raised by adding to the contemplation I have already recommended of the greatness of God, the recollection of His condescension to and care of man, and the consideration
 that

that to Him, supreme of all beings as He SERM.
is, we are more immediately approaching. VI.
For I am persuaded, that if Christians
would endeavour to impress these points on
their minds, they would feel such a con-
fidence in the goodness of God to hear, and
in His power to perform their petitions,
such gratitude for the benefits already heaped
on them, tempered with an awe of His
holiness and majesty, as would occasion a
great alteration in their behaviour, and cause
our churches to be indeed houses of prayer.

Most solemn in their purpose are the
meetings we there hold, most solemn, there-
fore, should be the manner in which they
are attended. In nations where the object
of worship is false, or among a people to
whom superstition hath dictated the form,
it is not matter of surprize that little real
devotion, and much behaviour unbecoming
the situation of men addressing themselves
to God, is visible in the worshippers.
Where the imagination alone is captivated,
not the understanding convinced, prayer can

SERM. scarcely consist in aught else than irregular
VI. and uncertain effusions, sometimes joined
in with ardour, at others attended with
manifest neglect, or even disgust. But
among us, to whom all the additional in-
formation we are happy enough to obtain,
brings new evidence of the existence and
perfection of the Being we worship, of
whose sole Godhead every part of the uni-
verse in which our souls can expatiate,
yields the most cogent testimony; among
us who have a word of revelation which
speaks the same language with His works,
points out to us other indications of His
perpetually overruling providence and go-
vernment of the moral world, and receiving
weight to its lessons from this internal and
demonstrative testimony of its own truth,
instructeth us to offer unto Him our praises
and supplications with sincere and humble
hearts, as having received from Him every
blessing, and on Him depending for a con-
tinuance of them; and with faithful minds,
not having our hope of favourable accept-
ance destroyed by the consciousness of our
own

own unworthiness, because He has appointed SERM.
a Mediatour, who hath promised ever to be VI.
in the midst of those who, through His 
intercession, seek the mercy of God, a different scene might be expected: and Christians, Protestant Christians at least, without being rigorously treated, might be called on not to disgrace their particular church, by appearing to entertain mean and dishonourable sentiments of the majesty of God, and of the glory due unto His name, to have little acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, which breathe, throughout every page, a spirit of fervent devotion, and awful veneration of Him, or not to have received any instruction concerning the nature and due performance of religious worship.

For, in truth, disgraceful to our church is the demeanour of no small portion of her members in the publick worship; and if it be so to her, to them who are guilty it must be more so: and, indeed, it is; being a reproach both to their hearts and to their understandings. For what must be the
heart

SERM. heart of that man who can come into an
VI. assembly where the mind is called to recollect the perfections of our Creatour, where we are reminded of our inestimable obligations to Him, where His wonders of old time are enumerated, where we are exhorted to offer Him the homage due unto Him as the most Highest, the thanks and praises we owe Him as our greatest Benefactour, as the Preserver and constant Blessor of all, and to join in confessing before Him the unworthy returns we make for all His goodness, in perpetually transgressing His commandments, and to deprecate His wrath, and supplicate Him for a continuance of His mercy, to (in the words of our sacred office) “humbly acknowledge our sins before God, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at His hands, to set forth His most worthy praise, to hear His most holy word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul;” yet feel so little share in the service in which these things are performing, that from his improper posture,

posture, his wandering looks, or his un-
seasonable silence, it is manifest that he
does not perceive himself interested in what
is passing? If ye can acquit such a man
of a most vicious insensibility of heart, open
to no pious thoughts, capable of no devout
affections, ye must charge the fault on his
understanding: a charge which, perhaps,
the pride of the guilty will more eagerly
resent than the other. Unless, however,
the inattention be owing (as in some it prob-
ably may) to that utter degree of mere
ignorance, that they understand not the
meaning of the words, know not the ten-
dency of the expressions which they hear;
such gradual instruction alone can help:
and if there be any such here, and their
minds be but willing to receive it, I should
hope, what I shall hereafter state in expla-
nation of the different parts of the service,
would both afford them part of the infor-
mation they so much need, and tend also to
correct that absence of thought, which even
devout persons are sometimes heard to com-
plain, surprizes them in the church, when
they

SERM.

VI.



SERM. they would willingly be invariably attentive. At present it is on our general behaviour in the congregation that I would remark, and convince you, if I could, of the absurd and criminal inconsistency of negligent carriage therein.

VI.

The prayers, in which we at least go there to join, are replete with the most earnest expressions of humility, with protestations of the most unfeigned sorrow for our past ill conduct, and supplications that God would imprint on our hearts His commandments, and give us grace henceforth to keep them. Now is it not mere mockery for any to pretend to join in such supplications, who, instead of having their thoughts employed on their own particular transgressions, and their breasts filled with serious purposes of amendment, are gazing around them to see who of their acquaintance are present, bowing or curtesying to those whose eyes they can catch, or observing how those near them are attired: who, instead of listening to the lessons read from those Scriptures

tures which contain the laws they have SERM.
asked for grace to keep, are drowned in VI.
sleep, or employing themselves in whisper-
ing to another? Does this behaviour perfect the beauty of holiness, or forward the work of edification? Or does it not, on the contrary, give an unseemly appearance to our religious assemblies, disturb the devotion of many who would otherwise be attentive, and afford a sad example to the younger part of the congregation? While of many of these, indeed, it may be said, that they stand not in need of such to make them guilty of the most reprehensible misbehaviour; those who ought to look after them, and instruct them at home how they ought to behave in the church, not playing or talking, but attending, with seriousness and reverence, to the prayers and the service, often most shamefully neglecting this duty, nay, frequently, by omitting to censure the misconduct of which they are either witnesses themselves, or informed by others; absolutely countenancing their children in
pro-

SERM. profaning the church, and offering an insult

VI. to Him who is therein worshipped.



Difficult would it be to particularize every distinct species of misbehaviour observable in our congregations; but to those who wish to render an acceptable sacrifice to their Maker, these general remarks will be sufficient to put them on their guard against any evil habits they have thoughtlessly acquired, or running into the absurdities they see others practise. Let it therefore suffice to say, that the religious assemblies of Christians are not holden for purposes of amusement or parade; that they do not meet in them to converse, or exhibit the beauty of their persons, or the ornaments of their dress; but that it behoves every one who would not make it incumbent on him to say, ere he leaves the church, “ Lord, lay not this sin to my charge!” to observe the instructions which the sacred writers give us for addressing ourselves to the Lord—“ That we should keep our feet
when

when we go to the house of prayer; that SERM.
we should bow down, and kneel before VI.
Him; and let not our supplications proceed
out of feigned lips. That we should sing
praises with understanding: that we should
be more ready to hear than to offer the
sacrifice of fools; remembering, that He
for whose worship we assemble is in Hea-
ven, and we on earth;" and that if we
justly estimated things, instead of being
listless and negligent, we should deem it a
most precious privilege to be permitted to
do homage unto Him, before whom the
most exalted of created beings do in ecstasy
fall prostrate, and exclaim, " Holy, Holy,
Holy, is the Lord of Hosts. The whole
earth is full of His glory." To Him,
therefore, let us be ever ready to ascribe
both with our lips and our hearts, blessing,
and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving,
and honour, and power, and might, for
ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON VII.

ON THE LITURGY.

I COR. XIV. 15.

I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

HAVING, in a former discourse, pro-
posed to lay before you some observa-
tions on the Liturgy of our church, in
hope that an explanation of the ground,
tendency, and connection of the several parts
of it, may contribute to interest your minds,
and keep alive your attention, whenever ye
present yourselves in the congregation, I
cannot introduce the subject better than by
the words I have read to you ; which were

SERM.
VII.

SERM. used by the apostle in the course of a rebuke
VII. he thought it necessary to give to some
members of the church of Corinth, who, vain of the miraculous gifts they had received, were forward to speak in an unknown tongue before the assembly: the small degree in which this could contribute to the edification of the generality of believers, he sets before them by various arguments; among which is one drawn from the absurdity of uttering prayers or praises in a language not understood by such as are present: for how shall these join in them? They may, indeed, with their tongues, say Amen, but their understanding has no share in the assent. Whereas not only the will, but the understanding also, should accompany our supplications, and join in our thanksgiving.

This censure forms one of the passages which contain those admirable testimonies that are scattered in different parts of the apostolick writings, against the corruptions of the great apostacy that hath since taken place

place in the church, and may justly encrease SERM.
our surprize at the blindness which the VII.
adherents of the papacy betray in obstinately
retaining a practice so specifically con-
demned, as that of praying in an unknown
tongue is in the chapter of the text: while
we ought to be thankful unto God, that it is
no longer in the strictest sense still merited
by us; although if taken in a more lax
signification, as condemning in general all
prayer which is not offered with the under-
standing, it is due to many among us; to
all those, I mean, who, while they present
themselves in the church as worshippers,
through want of the serious attention which
becomes the place and the employment, are
scarcely sensible of the tendency or meaning
of any portion of the service, reciting what
they do repeat as a form of words, the
mere getting through which is a full dis-
charge of their duty; whence it is scarcely
possible that their resort to the church can
produce any salutary effect on their mind,
or that they should return home justified by
the petitions they have put up.

SERM. In expostulating this case with such as
VII. are concerned in it, they should be reminded
how truly the blame rests on themselves alone, since the apostle's rule, that all things be done to edifying has, by the compilers of our Liturgy, been especially observed: the disposition of its parts being such as is calculated to engage and preserve the attention, and the appointment of a person, audibly to repeat those responses in which the congregation are to join, being an assistance seasonably afforded to those who themselves have never learnt to read, and cannot, therefore, by the prayer, be instructed what they are to answer.

The service itself opens most judiciously with some passages selected from the sacred writings, which contain encouragement to the penitent, and calls to the confession of our sins, thus forming a most apposite introduction to the succeeding solemn exhortation to acknowledge our offences, that we may obtain forgiveness of them, and to join in the general confession with a pure heart
and

and humble voice. Shall such an address, SERM.
then, furnished with every circumstance of VII.
truth, justice, and propriety, to give it
weight, be unable to make its way to our
hearts? When the purpose for which we
are come together is thus called to our re-
collection, and the ground of addressing
ourselves to God, (our obligations to, and
dependence on Him) is thus expressly stated
to us, can we fail to feel those pious emo-
tions which will make us readily comply
with the directions then given to kneel be-
fore the throne of grace, and, in a sub-
missive voice, repeat our petitions? But
wherefore should I ask, If we can? When
the beauty of our publick worship is, in
this part of it, so generally deformed on
the one hand by those who presumptuously
neglect to kneel when praying to the Lord
for mercy, and, on the other, by such as,
in direct contradiction to the exhortation
just given, do, with a very loud and quick
voice, repeat their petitions. Were these
two points corrected, were the whole assem-
bly to be seen in one supplicating posture,

SERM. and were all the congregation, in making the
VII. responses, to wait until the clerk had begun
them, and then regularly follow him, there
would seem to be one mind and one voice
in our churches ; and they would then ap-
pear to be, indeed, places appointed for the
solemn exercise of devotion : and were a
stranger to enter them, he would be stricken
with the scene, and would fall down and
worship.

The exhortation is immediately followed
by the general confession : of the terms of
which it may be truly observed, that they
are such as well become sinners appearing
before God ; pretending to no merit, offer-
ing no pleas of excuse, but suing for par-
don through Christ, and for righteous dis-
positions by the Grace of God. In the
opening of it, the encouragement holden
out to the returning sinner, in our blessed
Saviour's beautiful parable of the prodigal
son, is plainly alluded to ; and the mercy
of our Father, which is in Heaven, is
made the ground of hope that we shall be
accepted,

accepted, when we confess that we have SERM.
erred and strayed like lost sheep, and shewn VII.
more compliance with the desires of our
own hearts than attention to the divine
commandments. During his repetition of
the different sentences of this confession,
each individual should apply them to his
own case, and calling to remembrance those
parts of his duty which he hath omitted,
and those particulars in which he has trans-
gressed the precepts of the Lord, sincerely
lament his guilt in them, and direct his
petitions to the forgiveness of them. Other-
wise how can he join in the prayer with
which it is closed, that we may hereafter
live a godly, righteous, and sober life? Or
how assent to the words of the absolution,
by which we are exhorted to pray that our
lives may henceforth be pure and holy,
consonant with the professions of sorrow for
our past sins, and the declarations of peni-
tence which we have just made: for such,
I conceive, to be the intended meaning of
the word “ hereafter,” used in the latter
part of the absolution, and not as it is, per-

SERM. haps, often misunderstood, “ that the rest
 VII. of our life may henceforth be pure and
 holy,” which would be a mere piece of
 tautology : and such are the petitions offered
 in the subsequent prayer of our Lord, when
 we ask for our daily bread, spiritual as well
 as material, and beg we may not be led into
 temptation, but be delivered from the snares
 and power of the evil one. By this prayer,
 too, we complete this portion of our service,
 and endeavour to render our own imperfect
 petitions acceptable, by concluding them
 with the summary of Christ : a mode of
 sanctifying our supplications, which is pur-
 sued throughout our Liturgy, and occasions
 this incomparable form to be placed in every
 part of it.

Having thus closed that which makes the
 most proper introduction to a religious ser-
 vice, the humble acknowledgment of our
 crimes and unworthiness, and fervent appli-
 cation for remission and future assistance,
 we next proceed “ to render thanks to God
 for the great benefits that we have received

at


at His hands, by setting forth His most SERM.
worthy praise ;” beseeching Him “ to open VII.
our lips, that our mouth may shew forth
His praise ;” and that He “ would speedily
save and help us.”

At this period of the sacred office, we are directed by the rubrick to rise from the humble posture of supplicants into one joy, and break forth into that ancient doxology, wherein we give glory to those three divine persons, into covenant with whom we were initiated, and whose names were called over us in baptism. Of which doxology it may be remarked, that the phrase, “ as it was in the beginning,” seems to have been intended principally of the beginning of the Gospel, when the Son and Holy Ghost were so glorified with the Father, by the miracles wrought in the name of the one, and the divine gifts shed forth by the other. Although it may also be understood of that beginning in which God created all things by His word, and His Spirit moved over the face of the waters. It should here, too,
be

SERM. be observed, that there is scarcely any period
VII. at which greater inattention is betrayed to
those accurate directions which our book of
common prayer contains, for joining properly in every part of the service, than is generally shewn at this, where, instead of endeavouring to outstrip each other in eagerness to leave our former attitude, we should solemnly rise in a body, when the last response, previous to the doxology, is concluded.

The priest having first called on them to praise the Lord, and the people having replied to this exhortation, "The Lord's name be praised," a psalm is next repeated, being one selected as peculiarly proper to be said before those of the day : nor could a more judicious choice have been made ; the ninety-fifth psalm being excellently calculated to precede the various subsequent parts of the service, since in it we are exhorted not only to "come before the Lord with thanksgiving, and shew ourselves glad in Him with psalms ; but to bow and kneel before Him,"

as

as we do in the collects and the litany ; and SERM.
“ to hear His words,” as we do in the VII.
different passages read from the Scriptures 
for the lessons and epistle and gospel, as
well as in the commandments, without
hardness of heart. The reasons also for
these different exhortations are severally
assigned ; for our praise, His greatness as
the Creatour and Preserver of the world.
“ For the Lord is a great God, and a great
King above all gods. In His hand are all
the corners of the earth : and the strength
of the hills is His also. The sea is His,
and He made it ; and His hands prepared
the dry land”—for our worship and homage,
His being *our* God, who preserveth and
protecteth us ; “ for He is the Lord our
God, and we are the people of His pasture,
and the sheep of His hand”—and that we
be not disobedient to His word, because
those who were so in the wilderness were
cut off from entering into His rest.

Of the psalms, (a portion of which fol-
lows next) it may be suggested, that if
viewed

SERM. viewed merely as spiritual songs, they are
 VII. so truly excellent in their kind, that all
 attempts to imitate them must ever fall short
 of the original. The fervent devotion, the
 sense of God's glory, the consciousness of
 His providence which they breathe, are
 such as prove the writers of them to have
 felt themselves employed in praising the
 only true God; and if we consider them as
 dictated by the Holy Spirit, the adoption
 of them into our form of worship, is like
 lighting our sacrifice with fire that has
 fallen from Heaven.

The proper subjects for praise to God are
 either the general course of His govern-
 ment, in which righteousness and mercy
 shine forth so resplendently, or past acts of
 His power and goodness, or His assurances
 of future blessings. Of each of these the
 psalmist repeatedly sings in the sublimest
 strains. "The Lord looked down from
 Heaven, and beheld all the children of men:
 from the habitation of His dwelling He
 considereth all them that dwell on the earth:
 the

the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, SERM.
and His ears are open to their prayers: the VII.
countenance of the Lord is against them
that do evil, to root out the remembrance
of them from the earth.—Great are the
troubles of the righteous, but the Lord de-
livereth him out of all. Before I was
troubled, I went wrong: but now have I
kept thy word. An unwise man doth not
well consider this, and a fool doth not un-
derstand it: when the ungodly are green
as the grass, and when all the workers of
wickedness do flourish, then shall they be
destroyed for ever.—Foolish men are plagued
for their offence, and because of their wick-
edness: their soul abhorred all manner of
meat; and they were even hard at death's
door. So when they cried unto the Lord
in their trouble, He delivered them out of
their distress. He sent His word, and
healed them; and they were saved from
their destruction. Oh that men would
therefore praise the Lord for His goodness;
and declare the wonders that He doeth for
the children of men! That they would
offer

SERM. offer unto Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving;
 VII. and tell out His works with gladness!"



Such are the terms in which God's government of us His creatures is set forth, His abundant goodness to the righteous and the penitent; and His certain and equitable judgements on the wicked; that while, by repeating these, we join in telling out His works, we gain information for ourselves, and become instructed under all circumstances to trust in His providence, not to be alarmed at mere appearances, or fret ourselves because of the ungodly, but to commit our ways unto the Lord, abide patiently on Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

The past acts of God's power and greatness are touched on in those psalms which speak of the creation of the world, and the wonders He aforetime wrought for the children of Israel. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of His mouth. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded,


manded, and it stood fast. Whatsoever the SERM.
Lord pleased, that did He in Heaven and VII.
in earth. He smote the first-born of Egypt,
both man and beast. He smote divers na-
tions, and slew mighty kings, and gave
their land to be an heritage; even an heri-
tage unto Israel His people." And assu-
rances of future blessings to all who will
keep His covenant, are dispersed in various
places throughout the whole book of psalms.
It is in the language of triumph that these
are delivered; and with rapture do the
writers look forward to that time, when
" the Lord shall come with righteousness
to judge the world, and the people with
His truth: when the Lord shall build up
Sion, and when His glory shall appear."

In the most exalted terms is the happiness
of the Messiah's reign described.—" He
shall judge thy people according to right,
and defend the poor. In His time shall
the righteous flourish; yea, and abundance
of peace, so long as the moon endureth.
There shall be an heap of corn in the earth,
I high

SERM. high upon the hills. His name shall remain under the sun among the posterities;
 VII. which shall be blessed through Him, and all the heathen shall praise Him. Blessed be the Lord God, even the God of Israel; which alone doeth wondrous things; and blessed be the name of His Majesty for ever; and all the earth shall be filled with His Majesty. Amen. Amen."

Scarcely can I conceive that these and the like passages are ever repeated without exciting, in the breasts of all present, the correspondent emotions of earnestness and anxiety to have an inheritance in the happy state set forth in them. The psalmist's conviction of the truth of his own prediction was evidently so complete as to cause him to burst forth into the benediction with which this hymn closes; and he speaks with as much confidence of what he foretold, and manifests as grateful feelings for it, as if it was already come to pass. What then ought we to feel when the appearance of this happy scene is much nearer in this
 our

our day than it was at the time when these were penned ; and the certainty of its arrival has been further assured to us in the accomplishment of other predictions contained also in the psalms ? as in those foretelling the personal indignities and sufferings which our blessed Lord underwent, when He was “ betrayed by His own familiar friend : when the counsel of the wicked laid siege against Him : when they pierced His hands and His feet, parted His garments among them, cast lots upon His vesture, and stood staring and looking upon Him.” And in those wherein is foretold the success of His apostles preaching, spite of all the opposition they should meet from the great ones of the earth ; as in the well-known second psalm and others ; and in those too which suggest, that nevertheless the real worshippers and true servants of God would continue but in a poor and persecuted state, until some future period, when He would visibly interpose for their deliverance : “ Sit Thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

SERM. Neither can I pass without notice the
VII.  several penitential psalms which are scattered throughout the book; and in which individuals will frequently meet with passages well suited to their own cases. The deep sense which the penitent expresses of the wretchedness of a sinner's state, the ardour with which he supplicates for pardon, for spiritual assistance, and for restoration to the divine favour, may teach us how to lament our offences, and to sue for mercy on our own transgressions; and if we could but transfer the sentiments into our hearts, as well as utter the same language with our tongues, inestimable would be the benefit we should derive from the repetition of this part of our church service.

Having thus set forth the Lord's most worthy praise, we proceed according to the method mentioned in the exhortation to hear His most holy word: and that first in a lesson read from the Old Testament, which with that afterwards read from the New, is appointed with the intent of affording to those
Christians

Christians who have not the means of SERM.
studying the Holy Scriptures at home, an VII.
opportunity of gradually being made ac-
quainted with their contents in the church.
Neither can any one who is constant in his
resort thither, and pays due attention while
these portions of Scriptures are reading,
well fail of becoming in time instructed in
the various parts of holy writ. If, there-
fore, any one wilfully neglect such oppor-
tunities of gaining that learning which is
able to make him wise unto salvation, what
does he but harden his heart against hearing
the voice of the Lord?

In the books of the Old Testament are
exhibited to us those lessons which God
gave to His people the Israelites, either by
the mouth of His prophets, or by the man-
ner in which He sent on the whole nation,
or on some individuals of it, His corrections
or His blessings, His promises of perpetual
patronage to all who would obey His laws,
and His threats of punishment to those who
would not : by listening to these, therefore,

SERM. we may learn to be cautious of offending
 VII. Him, who can punish with such power and
 certainty, and also desirous of gaining His
 favour, who will so assuredly and greatly
 reward.

On the close of this lesson there is, in the morning service, appointed to be repeated an hymn, which, from the words with which it begins in the language in which it was originally composed, is called the *Te Deum*, and after those portions of the inspired writings that are introduced in the various offices, may be esteemed the sublimest composition contained in our book of common prayer. In this, after having heard repeated, in the preceding lesson, some great work of the Lord, or some judgement of His mouth, by which He did in time past manifest His righteousness or His supremacy, we, like the Israelites, when they saw Him answer the prayer of Elijah by fire from Heaven, burst forth into a confession of His sole Godhead—"We praise Thee, O God: We acknowledge Thee to be

be the Lord. All the earth doth worship SERM.
Thee, the Father everlasting." And pro- VII.
ceeding to acknowledge, in the unity of
the divine Majesty, the glory of the eternal
Trinity, we afterwards address ourselves
especially to Christ, supplicating Him as
our incarnate Saviour, Redeemer, and our
Judge, to have mercy upon us, and make
us to be numbered with His saints in glory
everlasting. This hymn has now, as is
generally received, been in possession of the
church upwards of thirteen centuries, and
remains a plain testimony of the faith of
the fourth century in which it was com-
posed.

There is a Canticle bearing, on the like
ground as the former, the title of Benedicite,
which may be repeated instead of the Te
Deum; but it is so seldom used, that I will
not detain you with any remarks upon it.
In the evening service there is substituted at
this period either the song of the blessed
Virgin Mary, or the ninety-eighth psalm.
How justly applied the first of these is,

SERM. little need be said to prove, since it is plain,
 VII. that after being reminded of what God
 hath formerly wrought in favour of His
 servants, the magnifying and rejoicing in
 Him is made more earnest by the reflection,
 that “ His mercy is on them that fear Him
 throughout all generations :” by which we
 are led to feel ourselves interested in that
 power and goodness, past exertions of which
 have just been related to us ; and for the
 last, the ninety-eighth psalm in that we
 sing “ the marvellous things which the
 Lord hath done ; the salvation and righte-
 ousness which He hath shewed in the sight
 of the Heathen, and the performance of the
 mercies He promised to the house of Israel,”
 in a strain of triumph, and with a sublimity
 of praise, which leave far, very far below
 them, the loftiest compositions that any
 other nation on earth but the chosen of God
 can boast,

I have now proceeded in the proposed
 review of our Liturgy as far as the limits
 of one discourse will permit ; the observa-
 tions

tions to be made on the remainder of it SERM.
must therefore be deferred. At present I VII.
shall only subjoin, that having entered on
it from a desire of rendering you more seri-
ously attentive to the various parts of the
service, by impressing on your minds the
signification and tendency of each, I beseech
you, do not suffer my pains to prove mis-
placed; but endeavour to add to the little I
have suggested by your own reflections;
and I doubt not, ye will discern propriety
that has escaped me, beauties that I have
not pointed out. And if ye can by these,
or any other means, excite in yourselves a
spirit of that real devotion which is felt, I
am afraid but by few, ye will, as having
gained an additional faculty, find it a source
of new pleasure, even of that ecstasy which
those, and those only can experience, who
truly rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the
God of their salvation.

SERMON VIII.

ON THE LITURGY.

I COR. XIV. 15.

*I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray
with the understanding also; I will sing
with the spirit, and I will sing with the
understanding also.*

I N my last discourse on these words, I SERM.
pursued the review of the Liturgy then VIII.
entered on as far as the close of the hymns
after the first lesson; in which, having tes-
tified the sentiments that were excited in
our breasts by what we had heard from the
Old Testament, we return to our seats while
one from the New is read; and we thus
hear Christ and His apostles instructing us
in

SERM. in the faith, or giving us directions for our
VIII. conduct. To this the sincere Christian will
listen as to the words of eternal life; and
finding many of those things which he had
heard from the law and the prophets explained by what is hence delivered; and the general lessons which are recorded to have been given by our blessed Lord in the gospels, more particularly applied by His apostles in their epistles, he will learn the benefit of comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and gradually arrive at the knowledge of truths which by the natural man, unpractised in the words of divine revelation, cannot be discerned, acquire an intimate acquaintance with the rules of life laid down by those teachers from whom the first Christians received the Gospel, and be able to determine, by the infallible decisions of the plain word of Scripture, what he ought to do, and what he ought to avoid.

The sentiments excited by the recollection of the blessing we enjoy in being thus taught of God, are next expressed by the song of
Zacharias,

Zacharias, in which we “ bleſs the Lord SERM.
for having viſited and redeemed His people, VIII.
and for His tender mercy, whereby the day
ſpring from on high hath viſited us ; to
give light to them that ſit in darkneſs, and
in the ſhadow ; and to guide our feet in the
way of peace.” Or by the hundredth
pſalm, in which we extol the everlaſting
mercy and permanent truth of the Lord,
and call on all nations to rejoice in Him,
and reſt aſſured, that He is their Creatour,
their Preſerver, and their God. In the
evening ſervice the correſpondent leſſon is
followed by the ſong of Simeon, in which
we acknowledge to have “ ſeen the ſalva-
tion of God,” and glory in that “ light
which, according to the very words of this
prophetick hymn, hath been raiſed to lighten
us Gentiles :” or, in lieu thereof, may be
repeated the ſixty-ſeventh pſalm, in which
the progreſs of the Goſpel is prayed for and
foretold,

Having proceeded thus far in our thankſ-
giving for the ineſtimable mercies of revela-
tion,

SERM. tion, we are next directed to conclude them
 VIII. by an open profession of the Christian faith,
 in the repetition of the articles of it comprized in that symbol which is called the Apostle's Creed ; and which should, therefore, not be hurried over, or only whispered, but said with a slow and audible voice : for otherwise, how is it to be known that we really join therein ? Our lips, indeed, may be seen to move, but what it is we repeat must be unknown to the brethren. And can this be called confessing God and Christ before the congregation ? Or can those, who thus smother the acknowledgement of their faith, have a due portion of that grateful zeal which is ever to be found in the breasts of sincere disciples of the Gospel ? Enthusiastick behaviour betrays a weak head, yet it may be accompanied with a warm and honest heart ; but the cold, inanimated, lifeless demeanour, observable in some, can proceed only from breasts in which every spark of real devotion is extinct.

As

As to this Creed itself, it is not called SERM.
that of the apostle's to signify that it was VIII.
compiled by those inspired preachers, but
as containing the doctrine taught by them.
The first Creeds used in the church consisted, probably, in little more than the baptismal confession, "I believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost:" but as the ceaseless curiosity of men canvassed every particular of revelation, and thence broached new errors, to counteract these, additional articles of the truth were put into the summary of faith, until it grew to the size which it now has, but which, after all, does not exceed a few lines.

Thus far, then, are we advanced in the service in which, by the exhortation, we were called to join: we have acknowledged our sins in the confession, we have set forth God's most worthy praise in the psalms, we have heard His most holy word in the lessons, and having, by the Creed, declared our steadfast belief in His revelation, it now comes most properly in order to offer
up


SERM. up to Him, in whose power and goodness
 VIII. we confide, our petitions for those things
 which are requisite and necessary as well
 for the body as the soul; and this our church
 proceeds to do in the collects and the litany,
 all to be repeated in the becoming posture
 of devoutly kneeling.

Neither is the transition in this, or any
 other part of our Liturgy, sudden or abrupt,
 but aptly and solemnly made: the minister
 first wishing that to the people which will
 assuredly ever give effect to their prayers,
 that the Lord may be in the midst of them;
 “ The Lord be with you :” and the people
 returning a wish that his ministry may be
 rendered acceptable by that which alone can
 duely sanctify it, “ the Lord’s being with
 His Spirit :” he addresses them in that an-
 cient form, “ Let us pray !” When hav-
 ing besought the Father, the Son, and the
 Holy Ghost for mercy, that our supplica-
 tions may be favourably received by the
 mediation and sanctification of which they
 so much stand in need, we are all instructed

to

to say the Lord's prayer with a loud voice ; SERM.
prefacing with this general summary the VIII.
particular petitions in which we afterwards
do according to the apostle's direction, " in
all things make known our request unto
God."


Before the commencement of the collects,
however, there are interposed several sen-
tences and responses, the former to be re-
peated by the minister standing, the latter
to be returned by the people kneeling : of
which it has been observed, that they an-
swer as so many compendiums to introduce
the several collects afterwards read. Thus,
" O Lord, shew thy mercy upon us ;" and
its response, answer generally as a petition
for mercy and salvation to the collect for
the day. " O Lord, save the king ;" and
its answer to the collects for the king, and
in him to those for the royal family.
" Endue thy ministers with righteousness ;"
and, " O Lord, save thy people ;" to that
for the clergy and people. " Give peace
in our time, O Lord ;" and, " O God,
make

SERM. make clean our hearts within us ;” with
VIII.  their responses, answer respectively to the
perpetual morning and evening collect for
peace and grace.

Thus is the attention of the congregation bespoken, as well by the solemn introduction to this part of the service before noticed, as by these sentences to the subsequent prayers : and if thus apprized of their matter, if thus called on to join in them with becoming devotion, they afterward betray distraction of thought, a wandering mind, or a languid indifference to what is doing, on themselves the fault rests ; for to excite proper sentiments, and lead them to a suitable behaviour, the church has done her part : and that, indeed, not only in what precedes, but in the collects themselves likewise ; in the compilation of which, weariness of mind is guarded against both by their brevity and their contents. For they commonly begin with an address to God under those epithets which express the attributes that we, in the body of the prayer, beseech

befeech Him to exercise in our behalf. As SERM.
when we pray that He would defend us VIII.
from all assaults of our enemies, we call on
Him as “ the Author of peace.” When
we beseech Him to preserve us from sin,
and order our doings, we address Him as
our heavenly Father. When we pray for
our sovereign, we invoke our God as
“ King of kings, and Lord of lords :” and
when for all sorts and conditions of men,
as the Creatour and Preserver of all man-
kind.

Now as the repetition of these attributes
is calculated to excite devotion in the soul,
so the blessings for which we supplicate in
the prayers which we daily repeat, are such
as we are liable to be daily interrupted in
the enjoyment of, unless the Almighty
continue to us His protection ; and these
our perpetual petitions are offered as was
the daily sacrifice in the temple, which was
ever the same, for perpetual blessings : for
peace, for grace, for aid against perils, for
kings, and all that are put in authority,

SERM. that we may lead a quiet life ; for the brethren, and for all men : and so accurately
 VIII.  are these prayers formed after the precepts of Scripture, that a man can scarcely neglect to join in any one of them without omitting to request something for which we are therein particularly instructed to pray : while they are all concluded in His name, Who hath assured us, that whatever we ask in it faithfully He will perform.

But to be somewhat more particular in our consideration of the several collects in their order : the collects for the week are generally collected from the matter of the epistles and gospels to which they are prefixed, we praying for grace to obey some precept, or follow some example delivered in those extracts from holy writ ; and they are, moreover, adapted to the several seasons in which the church observes her different festivals, containing supplications for God's assistance to us to observe the conduct becoming men who have received the blessings we on that occasion commemorate.


The

The subjects of the stationary collects I ^{SERM.}
have already enumerated: here it may be ^{VIII.}
added, that the two first include general
petitions for what is requisite and necessary
as well for the body as the soul, external
security, and religious disposition of mind.
While those which follow are prayers for
what, in all human probability, will best
tend to promote the acquisition, and perpetuate
the possession of these, the blessing of
God, first, on our civil governours, by
whose virtuous conduct and success our
tranquillity as citizens will be guarded; and
then, on the ministers of religion, and all
congregations committed to their charge,
through which there would ever be set before
us the true road to salvation, and we
should have sense and piety to follow it.

There now succeeds a prayer for God's
mercy on the human race in general, and
particularly on those with whom we are
connected in the unity of the catholick
faith: in which are occasionally introduced
the especial petitions of our church for any

SERM. of her members who desire the prayers of
 VIII. the congregation for their deliverance from
 any affliction with which it hath pleased
 God to visit them: a charitable office strongly
 recommended by the sacred writers, and of
 the good effects of which in behalf of those
 who faithfully request the performance of
 it, there should no doubt be entertained.

Having now proceeded in my observations as far as the end of those prayers, in lieu of which the Litany is, at set times, appointed to be said, before I go further I must speak also to that. This sublime office, then, directed to be said by both priests and people kneeling, commences with a most solemn invocation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in which we acknowledge the divine nature of each as revealed to us in the Scripture, and then confess what we are no less plainly taught by the same infallible oracles, the unity of the Godhead. To this invocation succeed several short petitions addressed to Christ, in which we deprecate those punishments,
 either

either spiritual or external, which we have SERM.
by our transgressions merited; the priest VIII.
naming the evils, and the people, in the 
most earnest terms, supplicating that they
may be averted, “ Good Lord, deliver us !”
And such are the particulars of these peti-
tions, that the very repetition of them, with
an attentive mind, will tend to make us
better men : since to pray in the most earnest
terms, that we may be delivered from every
kind of sin, and yet not strive ourselves to
avoid offending, would be a presumptuous
inconsistency with which the dullest could
not but be stricken. The topics too which
we use to conjure, as it were, the Lord to
help us, are calculated to soften our hearts,
and raise in us the affections of piety and
gratitude.

The supplications of the Litany extend
to all the points that the collects, in lieu of
which it is appointed to be said, compre-
hend, and being urged throughout in the
strongest manner, are at last closed in a
most solemn style by an address to Christ,

SERM. as the Son of God, and as the Lamb by
VIII. which the sins of the world are taken away,
by the Lord's prayer, and the ejaculations
which precede it: to which being subjoined
two short sentences declarative of our con-
sciousness of our own unworthiness, the
accustomed invitation is given to pray; and
the comfort we have now received in thus
performing our devotions is expressed by a
supplication, that no persecutions may ever
prevent our giving thanks to God in His
holy church, through Jesus Christ our
Lord: when there follows a series of praises
and ejaculations, powerfully expressive of
that overflowing fulness of heart which
ever springs from the minds having risen
to the summit of devotion. Neither is the
prayer that then succeeds less suited to the
turn which the soul, at such a season, na-
turally takes in recollecting her own infir-
mities, the chastisement she in justice de-
serves, and how much she stands in need of
that only sure support under a sense of
guilt, and the attacks of adversity, a firm
trust and confidence in the mercy of our
God.

At

At this period are introduced applications SERM.
to the throne of Grace on any particular VIII.
subjects, in respect of which we more especially stand in need of relief: after which our church proceeds to compleat her obedience to the apostolick precept, and accompany her requests for future with thanksgiving for the blessings already received, by a prayer most excellent in its kind; in which the invocation of the Father of mercies, the enumeration of benefits, the preference given to that by which all the rest are crowned, our redemption, the supplication that we may unfeignedly manifest our gratitude, by giving up ourselves to the service of God, and the ascribing of all honour and glory unto Him, combine to render this form of returning thanks just and beautiful; and, I would hope; never are repeated without every heart's freely joining in the offering. There is too herein provided, a clause for those individuals who desire to praise God before the congregation, for His peculiar mercies to them; and which, it is to be wished, was more frequently read at the
N 4request

SERM. request of those who have before solicited
 VIII. the prayers of the church, and had the re-
 ~~~~~~covery they sought vouchsafed unto them.

The next collect, that of Chrysostom, is addressed to our great High Priest, who sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to perfect our prayers by His intercession; and is such an humble submission of all our petitions to His wisdom and goodness, as becomes creatures ignorant and short-sighted as we are. And this part of our service closes by the priest's uttering, in the posture of a suppliant, the wish of St. Paul, in which the favour of the Son, the love of the Father, and the constant assistance of the Holy Spirit, being asked for us all, may make a strong impression on our minds, and cause us to rise from prayer with dispositions befitting those who are candidates for such great blessings.


The primitive practice of the church to celebrate the Lord's supper on every return of His day, was the cause of the office of  
 the

the communion being on Sundays and holy-  
days superadded to the usual morning  
prayer: and when, from the decrease of  
Christian piety, the custom of so frequently  
communicating, was laid aside, part of the  
office was still retained in constant use, as a  
testimony that though the devotion of her  
children be grown cold, the church still  
acknowledges her duty perpetually to com-  
memorate her Saviour's death.

SERM.  
VIII.  


The opening of this service is most solemn, and calculated to excite that reverence of mind which every one present should, at such a season, feel. The priest having advanced to the table while the congregation are singing a psalm; (at which time, in lieu of the confused scene of a few standing, and others sitting, as if they had nothing to do with what is going forward, all should be attentive, and present themselves in the proper posture of praise). That concluded, they are directed to fall on their knees, when the celebration of this sacrament, which Christ ordained, is begun by  
the

SERM. the prayer which He also taught, succeeded

VIII.  by a collect, in which we particularly pray for that which, on such an occasion, is particularly requisite, that God would please to purify our hearts by His Holy Spirit ; that our love of Him may be perfect, which would make us, on hearing His commandments severally repeated, sincerely lament those our transgressions of them which we may call to mind ; and our homage worthily offered, that our supplications for will, henceforth to obey His laws, may be unfeigned : for such is the meaning of the sentences which are uttered by the congregation after each commandment has been read by the priest ; “ Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.” By these means we do, in a manner, renew our covenant with God, beseeching to accept our repentance of what is past, and promising henceforth to observe all that the Lord hath spoken. And here, if experience did not prove the contrary, one might imagine, that there could be no need of suggesting, that Christians ought to attend  

3

this

this service with the most profound awe; SERM.  
and that the just humility of voice with VIII.  
which they join in the supplications should  
shew, that they “ pray with spirit, and  
with the understanding also.”

The precept, “ Honour the king,” being in Scripture connected with that of “ Fear God,” there is next interposed a collect for our sovereign, that he may seek the glory of God in trying to preserve his people as in wealth and peace, so in godliness; and that his subjects may render him a conscientious obedience, as serving the Lord, and not man : and wisely are these requests conjoined, since that monarch, who does not sincerely endeavour to promote among his people the honour of the King of kings, cannot expect that his lower authority will be revered by those whom he encourages to shew contempt for an higher.

To the collect for the day I have already spoken : but of the epistle and gospel which are attached to it, it may be remarked, that

as



SERM. as in the commandments delivered by Moses  
 VIII. we hear what was said to those of old time,  
 so in these extracts from the New Testament we hear what our Lord hath further enjoined. The reading of the gospel is, too, directed to be attended with particular respect, that of the whole congregation standing; and there is a custom likewise of the people, on its being announced, answering, “Glory be to Thee, O Lord!” a practice very ancient, and, though no longer so, yet once commanded in our rubrick. The Nicene Creed follows the gospel; and it seems to be placed here that no one who does not hold the Christian faith should partake in the sacrament now about to be communicated.

Although it be usual in churches where there is but one to minister, to dismiss the congregation with a blessing immediately on the conclusion of the sermon, yet it is ordained, that even when there is no communion, the sentences of the offertory, the prayer for the church militant, and a concluding

cluding collect, should be read, whereby our service would, when thus finished, conclude with the charitable offices of both praying for the brethren, and contributing to the assistance of those who are in necessity among us : for the compilers of our Liturgy forget not the example of the apostolick age, but directed that the first day of the week there should always be a collection made for the poor : the present neglect of which direction is much to be lamented, while its consequences are heavily felt : providing for the indigent is, in many who contribute to it now, no longer an act of charity, but of compulsion, the distressed themselves are obliged to share their scanty pittance with others not so distressed as themselves ; poverty is made a trade ; and the profligate are often supported in their vices by forced contributions of the parish.

But when the Lord's supper is to be celebrated, after the prayer for the whole state of Christ's church, the priest addresses the congregation, in a solemn exhortation,  
to

SERM.  
VIII.  


SERM. to examine and judge themselves that they  
VIII. may not be judged of the Lord, but be  
meet partakers of those holy mysteries;  
recalling to their recollection the judgements  
which St. Paul represents the Corinthians  
to have suffered for treating this sacrament  
with irreverence, and not distinguishing the  
Lord's body from common food; which  
were various diseases and fundry kinds of  
death: the mercy of the Lord punishing  
their offences in this world, that they might  
not be condemned when He cometh to judge-  
ment. A very different mode of visitation  
from that which the weak and uninstructed  
frequently imagine is herein threatened, and  
the dread of incurring which, deters them  
from participating in the communion of  
that body and blood, without which we can  
have no life remaining in us. To this  
exhortation is added another, to join in an  
humble confession to Almighty God: the  
terms of which confession are still more  
earnest, the expressions of our own ill de-  
serts and urgent need of the divine mercy,  
still more warm than those in that of the  
com-

commencement of the morning prayer : and SERM.  
it is followed by a form of absolution still VIII.  
more solemn than what is there used, and  
by extracts from the Scriptures, replete with  
comfort and encouragement for the humble  
penitent, whose sense of his unworthiness  
might otherwise deter him from approach-  
ing to that table, where he can alone become  
partaker of that sacrifice by which we ob-  
tain remission of our sins, and hopes of  
everlasting salvation.


The mixture of humility and faith this  
previous service is calculated to produce, are  
necessary preparatives for that holy feast  
which the priest, after another most appro-  
priate prayer, begins by breaking the bread,  
and pouring out the wine, which he con-  
secrates by prayer, and having received of  
them his self, distributes among the congre-  
gation, as he points out to each the end of  
the institution, and prays that he may be  
preserved to everlasting life, by the body  
and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who  
died for him.

Least,

SERM.   Least, however, the humble posture of  
VIII. kneeling, in which we are, by the rubrick,  
commanded to receive the elements of bread  
and wine, should, through weakness or  
malice, be misconstrued, there is a specifick  
declaration in our prayer book subjoined to  
this service, declaring the church's abhor-  
rence of any idolatrous veneration of them.

The remaining portion of this service,  
(consisting of that of the Lord, and another  
prayer, in which we dedicate ourselves anew  
to the service of God, of an anthem to be  
said or sung, and the blessing pronounced  
by the priest) yields neither impropriety,  
sublimity, or power of impression to any  
other part. Why then to a service so plain,  
and yet so full, should there be added a load  
of prayers, ejaculations, meditations, and I  
know not what, from other devotional  
books, which may distract the mind, may  
lower it into despondency, or raise it to en-  
thusiasm, may teach Christians to mingle  
with their offerings what the Lord has for-  
bidden to be put to any sacrifice to Him,  
leaven



leaven or honey ; but for the direction of SERM.  
the sober Christian, for the support of un- VIII.  
affected piety, will, we may venture to say,   
never be found to surpass that form of our  
common prayer-book, in which the several  
particulars of the institution, as described  
by our great apostle, or the evangelists, are  
accurately retained, and the whole of the  
service is well calculated to fill the mind  
with that due reverence, that holy confi-  
dence, that gratitude towards God, and the  
Lamb who was slain and liveth for ever,  
and that sense of the indispensable necessity  
of good will towards men, and future holi-  
ness of life, which will best render us  
worthy partakers of those holy mysteries.

But yet more earnestly may it be asked,  
Why any who profess themselves believers  
in Christ, will not repair to a service so  
rational, to a rite so strictly enjoined, and  
the benefits of which are so inestimable ?  
Our church catechism truly teacheth us,  
that this sacrament, as well as that of bap-  
tism, is generally necessary to salvation ;


SERM. that is, necessary to all who have it in their  
 VIII. power to repair unto it. That this necessity  
 is not too strongly stated, ye may, perhaps, be convinced, if ye recollect, that as the true believers in Christ are, in the New Testament, said to be made by Him, priests unto God, one particular in the consecration of the priests under the law deserves attention; which is, that it was not complete without their eating of the flesh of the victim of consecration. Go, then, and learn what this meaneth, when compared with the words of our Lord, “ Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.”

And, for those who dare not approach the holy table, from a consciousness of their own sinful conduct, it most highly behoves such to reflect, while they have power so to do, since they find that they cannot, at the same time, serve Christ and Belial, whose service they should in wisdom, and in safety, choose. Christ hath commanded you to  
 com-

commemorate His death ; this, ye say, the SERM.  
impurity of your lives renders you un- VIII.  
worthy of doing. But Christ hath also  
commanded you to repent, and cleanse your-  
selves from sin. Can your disobedience to  
this commandment serve as a plea for your  
neglect of the other ? Or does not your un-  
worthiness, by being voluntary, become  
criminal also ? St. Peter did once, on the  
plea of unworthiness, hesitate to comply  
with His Lord's will, and that in a case,  
too, in which such hesitation must, if ever  
it could be so, have been pardonable : But  
what was our Saviour's judgement of it ?  
“ If I wash not thee, thou hast no part with  
me.” He who instituted the feast, is the  
best judge of the qualifications of those  
who come to it ; and the only one He re-  
quires in us is, that we be His disciples,  
and continue in His words. If we become  
sincerely such ; if we thus live in the true  
practice of what He hath enjoined, the  
shewing His death by this holy communion,  
will prove to us a source of comfort inex-  
pressible ; for we shall then look for the

SERM. day of His coming, as for that of the  
VIII. arrival of the beloved and gracious Master  
of the family of which we are members,  
in whom are placed our hopes of deliverance from whatever evils we may at present feel, and our expectations of peace, security, and perfect happiness. But if our love of this world, if our unwillingness to part with enjoyments that are forbidden, or to practise that self-denial which religion, in some cases, requires, induce us to reject the call, and despise the invitation which the Lord hath given us, What will be our confusion of face, when He appears? Think how we shall then meet Him, with whose request so affectionately made, and accompanied with every circumstance to give it effect we have thus obstinately refused to comply! What sentence can we then expect from Him? What but the condemnation of those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, everlasting banishment from the presence of Him whose mercies we have thus contemned; and all the miseries consequent on the wrath of God and of the Lamb?

Of

Of the power to avoid these we are yet SERM.  
possessed: how long we may continue so, God VIII.  
alone knows ; but if we have any gratitude   
for the benefits we have already received,  
any knowledge of the terrours of the Lord,  
any care of our own salvation, let us no  
longer delay to make use of it ; but repent,  
and cleanse ourselves from sin, that we may  
ever be ready to receive the cup of salva-  
tion, and to call on the name of the Lord.





## SERMON IX.

ON THE CAUSES OF OUR PRAYERS REMAIN-  
ING OFTEN UNANSWERED.

---

PHILIPP. IV. 6.

*Be careful for nothing : but in every thing  
by prayer and supplication with thanks-  
giving, let your requests be made known  
unto God.*

**A**MONG the various subjects on which SERM.  
the reasonings of men are employed, IX.  
religious questions are those wherein we  
must expect to find partiality the most pre-  
valent. For religion being every man's  
concern, every man feels himself interested  
in the determinations relating to it, and  
consequently becomes inclined, as in his  
own cause, to favour one party rather than

SERM. the other. And hence, perhaps, chiefly it


IX. hath come to pass, that more disputes have  
arisen, more mistakes have been made, more  
sophistry hath been employed, and greater  
obstinacy and perverseness displayed on this  
subject, than on any other whatever. Men  
who either seem to themselves to have obtained by their past behaviour, or are earnestly resolved to live so in future as to obtain a claim to the blessings which religion promises, are often too hasty in forming their ideas of them, and not content to wait for the coming of that kingdom in which their treasure is laid up, figure to themselves such success and felicity even in this life, as neither are contained in the promises of God, nor can be granted consistently with the good order of his government. The disappointments with which these men meet, although no one be to blame for them but themselves, do not only weaken their own ardour in running the race that is set before them, but do also greatly strengthen the conceits of the opposite party, who, conscious that themselves have nothing to  
hope

hope from the promises, but much to fear SERM. from the threats of religion, are as ready to observe, and as eager and unreasonable in improving every appearance that tends to lessen their credit, as the others are extravagant in their expectations of immediate profit.

The evils which arise immediately, or by consequence, from these absurdities, are so manifest, that every good man must be desirous of correcting both in himself and in his friends, a partiality so frequently destructive of peace and salvation, and of obviating the various mistakes it gives birth to.

Now some of these relate particularly to the doctrine of the text, and have greatly contributed to render men so inexcusably remiss and negligent in the duty there enjoined as they are at present. Great effects are, in the Gospel, promised to our prayers to God through Christ; and we are directed to make application to Him in all our wants and distresses, and encouraged to expect

SERM. expect relief and assistance from Him.—

IX.  “Every one that asketh,” we are assured, “receiveth;” and our Lord hath promised, that “whatsoever we ask in His name, shall be given unto us.” But, nevertheless, if on the ground of these general promises, any man should hope that all the prayers he may think proper to put up will be granted, the experience of others may convince him, that he will be miserably disappointed?

What shall we say then? Are the promises of God in Christ become vain? and are the impious and unbelieving at length justified in thinking that the devout petitioners of Heaven offer only the sacrifice of fools? God forbid! He is yet true, and just, and merciful, nor is one particle of His covenant fallen to the ground. All our disappointments are to be ascribed to our own vanity and hastiness, which will not permit us to recollect, that none of the promises of the Gospel are unconditional: since, if this were duly reflected on, it  
would



would be found, that we have no cause to SERM.  
complain, and our adversaries as little to IX.  
triumph. For be it acknowledged that the  
prayers of Christians are often, nay, oftener  
rejected than granted; yet if the terms on  
which alone we are assured they shall be  
heard are, on our part, as often neglected,  
Where does the fault lie but on ourselves?  
and that these are so, any man of common  
sense and moderate experience may be certi-  
fied by the following review of them.

1. The first thing insisted on in Scrip-  
ture, as needful to the efficacy of our prayers,  
is faith: "Let him ask," saith St. James,  
"in faith, nothing wavering;" that is,  
possessed of a firm reliance on the truth,  
power, and goodness of Him to whom we  
address our prayers, and a just confidence  
in the mediation of Him, in whose name  
we offer them. As far as we are deficient  
in either of these, so far is our praying a  
mere mockery. To beg the exertion of  
attributes, the very existence of which we  
doubt, differs but little from throwing a  
sarcasm

SERM. farcaſm on the imagined want of them;  
IX. and to doubt whether God will liſten to our  
prayer, when made according to the direc-  
tions He hath given, What is it, in fact,  
but to miſtruſt His moſt plain and repeated  
promiſes, and make the God of truth a  
liar? And can a man, who is guilty of  
this, think that He ſhall receive any thing  
of the Lord? Or can the rejection of  
prayers, thus marred with infidelity, be  
made a ſubject of complaint? If not, all  
ſuch petitions may return empty into the  
boſom of the offerers, and the general pro-  
miſes of the Goſpel ſtill remain unim-  
peached.

Perhaps, however, you think this condi-  
tion has not been wanting to your prayers.  
You are conſcious that you have never  
petitioned Heaven but with full aſſurance  
of the power, and goodneſs, and truth of  
God, and of the reality and prevalence of  
Chriſt's mediation; yet have your expecta-  
tions of ſucceſs, though raiſed on theſe  
good grounds, proved vain. But have not,  
then,

then, haste and impatience accompanied SERM.  
these your expectations? Have you not, IX.  
instead of waiting with resignation the  
Lord's good time, begun to murmur, be-  
cause your prayers were not immediately  
answered; and without reflecting how many  
consequences the granting of your petition  
might draw with it, partly given up your  
confidence in God, and faith in His pro-  
mises, because His favours kept not pace  
with your wishes; thus becoming deficient  
in those very qualities which the Gospel  
requires in all who would obtain the  
patronage of Heaven; and directly neglect-  
ing the doctrine of our Lord Himself, Who  
hath charged us, "that we should pray,  
and faint not." Indeed, we may of our-  
selves often discover good reasons why par-  
ticular petitions should not be immediately  
answered; and since the divine wisdom may,  
doubtlessly, see many more, to deny the  
existence of all such, and attack at once the  
goodness or truth of God for the seeming  
miscarriage of our prayers, is such impious  
temerity, as may well deprive the man who  
is

SERM. is guilty of it, of all future benefit from  
 IX. his applications to the Being, whom he hath  
 thus insulted !

The two conditions already mentioned will account for the ill success that has attended many petitions ; but there is another no less plainly stipulated, and equally reasonable, which has, I am afraid, rendered ineffectual many more. St. John informs us, that our Lord said to his disciples, “ If ye abide in my words, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Here, then, let all who conceive that they have any ground to complain of the inattention of Heaven to their prayers, examine themselves anew, and recollect, if it is not their *sins* that have separated between themselves and their God. A scrutiny into every part of their conduct, especially into those parts of which they are least suspicious, will probably manifest to them many faults they had before overlooked, and shew their own state to be such, that until it is amended by repentance, their  
 prayer

prayer must be an abomination, and their hope presumption. Neither ought such enquiries to be confined merely to their conduct, past or present; but they should be extended to their views and designs in regard to the subjects of their petitions; since the disappointments met with do too frequently arise from the cause assigned by an apostle in these memorable words: “Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss; that ye may, consume it on your lusts.” When the end of our addresses to Heaven is the obtainment of things which in lieu of purposing to use for the honour of God, and the good of his creatures, we only intend to make the instruments of selfish satisfaction, and the gratification of our own depraved appetite; ought we in any manner to wonder or repine at our prayers being rejected? Can we call God unjust for not enabling us to break his laws with ease and pleasure? Or can we accuse Him of want of goodness, because He will not make the path to destruction more easy and inviting to us?

But



SERM. But yet there may be others whose cases  
IX. none of the conditions hitherto mentioned  
can reach. Doubtlessly there are Christians, who with a sincere and honest heart, truly confiding in the promises of God, and walking stedfastly in the way of righteousness, have besought Him with fervour and devotion for favours which they purposed to use agreeably to his will; and yet have not received that return to their prayers which they hoped for, and thought they had good reason to expect. And what shall we think of these disappointments? Shall we attribute them to a want of goodness, or truth or power in God; or rather to the ignorance or want of judgement of the men, who esteemed and asked for as blessings those things, which, if granted, would, in reality, have proved curses? Surely it is most reasonable to conclude the last; and if so, "What man is there of you, who, if his son ask for bread, will give him a stone; or, if he ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children,

children, How much more shall our heavenly Father give only what is beneficial unto those who ask Him? Enough, I conceive, has now been said to shew, not only that it is with justice and reason that many petitions are rejected, but likewise that the disappointments of those who offer them, afford no ground for doubting the truth of any of the Gospel promises; since the conditions on which those promises are expressly made, experience will teach us, are, in numberless instances, left unobserved.

SERM.

IX.  


There still remains, however, another to be added, which is that of the text; that our requests for future blessings should be accompanied with expressions of acknowledgement and gratitude for those we have already been favoured with. The propriety of this I need not go about to prove, since the heart of every man who is not entirely lost to all sense of virtue and moral obligation, will immediately represent the baseness of negligence in this point—and I would! I could add, that I *need* not dwell on it,

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SERM. because the instances of such neglect are so rare ! But, in truth, they are the contrary, and the forgetfulness of the benefits conferred on us by God is, if possible, more common than that of those we receive from men. Wherefore Christians should be often called on to reflect, that as one end of God's moral government of us his creatures is our improvement, in order to our happiness, it would be acting inconsistent with that end, was He to encourage ingratitude by conferring additional favours on those who are unthankful for past ones ; and thence learn, how little hope there can be of the reception of those requests which proceed from men, who have failed to express their thanks for the attention that has been already vouchsafed them.

While I have been making the above observations, it hath probably occurred to you, that some of the conditions mentioned are so closely related among themselves, that in lieu of being separated they might properly have been considered unitedly. But there  
is

SERM.

IX.  


is an advantage arising from viewing them thus severally. It may be suggested by the perverse and impious wit of some of our gainfayers, “ that these conditions are craftily inserted in the Gospel, that when the great promises there made of Heaven’s listening to the prayers of Christians are, by experience, found to fail, its ministers may still be furnished with an excuse, and a plea whereby to defend the credit of their religion, by throwing the blame of the miscarriage on the petitioners themselves.” Now by the different conditions being stated singly, the objection of the promises being clogged therewith, is placed in its strongest light, which is that in which I could wish to have all objections urged against the Gospel put, before a refutation is attempted; because if they are once shewn to be invalid, even when viewed thus advantageously to themselves, there can remain no ground for any man of the least candour to cavil further. With regard to that before us, the weakness of it will appear by the answer your own reasons will suggest to the follow-

SERM. ing question: Are not the conditions before  
IX. us such, that, even if they had not been  
expressed, we still could not, consistently  
with a just idea of the divine attributes,  
have expected the petitions of those, who  
did not observe them, to be granted? For  
to this you must answer in the affirmative;  
unless you can entertain the blasphemous  
thought that God will encourage wicked-  
ness by favouring sinners; or no less impi-  
ously and absurdly imagine, that He will  
take advantage of the ignorance of men,  
who simply ask for they know not what,  
to *curse* them by complying with their  
prayers. The objection which may be  
drawn from the number of the conditions  
specified being thus overthrown, and ques-  
tions which might arise in the breasts of  
speculative men being already answered by  
a review of the conditions themselves, it  
now remains only to consider the reasonable-  
ness of the apostle's advice in the text, and  
which, indeed, it requires very little atten-  
tion to discover, since, if God will vouch-  
safe to listen to our prayers, when we ask

what





what is profitable for us, and correct them SERM.  
when unadvisedly offered, we may well IX.  
cast away all anxiety and solicitude; assured  
that whatever evils he may permit to vex  
us for a time, will, in the end, work together for our good; and thus conscious of living under his mighty patronage and protection, be alway rejoicing.

Such was the situation of the first Christians, who preserved a constant intercourse with their great Creatour by their prayers. Through the success of *these* they were enabled to attain to that height of charity, as to be willing even to lay down their lives for the brethren; by these they gained strength to vanquish the greatest temptations; by these they acquired that patience and religious fortitude, as to meet with calmness all the tortures which the cruelty and misplaced zeal of their most furious adversaries could suggest: and if, in these our days, the love of many is grown cold; if we seem not to be actuated by the same spirit that dwelt in the earliest of our predecessors

P 3

SERM. decessors in the profession of the Gospel ;

IX.  if we behave not as members of the same communion, nor as servants of the same Lord ; if the warmth of our devotion is scarcely so great as might be expected even from the embers of a fire which once burnt so bright ; *these* things are, in good part, to be ascribed to our own simple negligence and impious perverseness in not using the same means of obtaining from the Father of spirits, those spiritual supplies, from which our forefathers reaped so great benefits, and of which we stand in so much need : whence, by a strange and unreasonable intermixture of things, the kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness, instead of being made the first objects of our pursuit, are the last thought on ; temporal enjoyments are preferred to everlasting felicity ; and the world and its good things have taken such an entire possession of our hearts, that serious and religious thoughts are deemed disagreeable intruders into the breast ; and whatever seems likely to give rise to them, is discountenanced and banished. Where *this* will

will end, God alone knows; but such is SERM.  
the prospect among mankind at present, as IX.  
would at least render it excusable, to put a   
very extensive construction, on that declaration of our Lord, “ that on the Son of  
man’s coming, He should not find faith  
upon the earth.”



## SERMON X.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE REMAINING  
HOURS OF THE SABBATH.

---

ISAIAH LVIII. 13, 14.

*If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath,  
from doing thy pleasure on my holy day;  
and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of  
the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour  
Him, not doing thine own ways, nor find-  
ing thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine  
own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself  
in the Lord: and I will cause thee to ride  
upon the high places of the earth, and feed  
thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father:  
for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

WE learn from various passages in the SERM.  
books of the prophets, that their X.  
profanation of the sabbath had no small  
share



SERM. share in bringing down on the Jews the  
X. heavy punishment of their seventy years  
captivity; and, indeed, so sensible were they of this, that after the wonderful deliverance which God wrought for them in bringing them back to their own land, from the fear of again offending in this respect they ran into the opposite extreme, and became superstitious and unreasonable in their mode of observing it. This fact, however, affords us a very strong testimony that they had suffered most severely for their former disobedience, and should, in all reason, make us circumspect as to any similar offences. That this day is to be kept holy by us, I have already demonstrated to you, and stated at large the grounds on which the duty of hallowing it is founded. I have spoken, too, of the obligations incumbent on us to appear this day in the assemblies of Christians holden for the publick worship of God, as well as to the behaviour becoming all who present themselves therein: it now remains to speak of the employment of those hours of it which are not  
passed

passed in the church ; and the text happily SERM.  
supplies us with express and ample direc- X.  
tion as to this point. “ If thou turn away  
thy foot (said the Lord) from the sabbath  
from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ;  
and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of  
the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honour  
Him, not doing thine own ways, nor find-  
ing thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine  
own words.” For these words aptly ex-  
press those ways by which men, though  
they rest from their servile works on a sab-  
bath, yet employ it in a manner by no means  
consistent with hallowing it. It is not meant  
to press on Christians the rigorous obser-  
vances of the Jewish laws : from these  
(thanks to the divine mercy) we are free ;  
but the command to keep the seventh day  
holy being, as ye are apprized, not of Moses  
only, but from the beginning, it extends  
as widely as the descendants of Adam, to  
whom it was given ; and on all his sons  
therefore, it is incumbent to consider how  
they can most perfectly comply with it.


First,

SERM. First, then, it should be remembered, that  
X. it is the whole day, not a few hours of it  
only, that we are enjoined to hallow, and, consequently, no part of it should be spent inconsistently with this purpose for which it is set apart, but as much as may be of it in making ourselves better acquainted with the will and testimonies of that almighty Being, who has appointed it to us His creatures as a perpetual memorial of His having, on the seventh day, rested from all His work that God created and made. Indeed, this is, in some measure, absolutely necessary, to prevent our very attendance in the church being in part nugatory. The discourses which are there delivered to us are not such as will, of themselves, furnish the hearers with full information on either the doctrines or the practice of religion: both from their nature, and the time allowed for them, they must contain merely the outlines of a comprehensive subject, or be confined to the discussion of a particular point; in either of which cases, ye must be sensible, that the labours of the preachers can have

but little fruit, unless they be forwarded SERM.  
and improved by enquiries and meditations X.  
carried on by ourselves at home. What is  
said from the pulpit must be often unintel-  
ligible, the truth of the remarks made, not  
discernible, the justice of the remonstrances,  
and the propriety of the exhortations given,  
remain unseen, unless those who attend  
have already acquired some knowledge of  
the Holy Scriptures, and have a general ac-  
quaintance with the history therein related,  
and the great truths therein declared. Now  
when is such knowledge to be obtained?  
When are these books to be studied? If  
they are not on this day, little probability,  
I conceive, will remain of their being so on  
any other. If, after attendance on the di-  
vine worship, and listening to the word of  
exhortation, while the ideas raised by them  
are fresh and powerful, our minds disrelish  
what is grave and serious, Can it be expected  
that they will easily be turned to such sub-  
jects from amid the hurry of business, or  
the tumult of diversions?

Here,

SERM.

X.  


Here, then, is employment for some of the time that is not spent in the congregation; and another portion of the same is requisite for giving that religious instruction to our households, which it is the duty of every head of a family to impart, as far as he is able to do. Neither should the too general neglect of this induce us to think it a matter of but little importance; since no duty can become less a duty merely because we forget, or wilfully omit to perform it; while the benefits resulting to society from the general practice of this would be such as amply to recompense, even in this world, every individual for all the trouble he would take in thus instructing the ignorant, and filling the hungry soul with goodness.

All the hours of this day, during which the mind can, without fatigue, keep up a serious attention, being thus disposed of, either in attendance on the publick worship, or in reading for ourselves, or in giving or receiving instruction; we are next to consider



sider of the rest not so much how they SERM.  
ought to be employed, as how they ought <sup>X.</sup>  
not to be spent? for common sense itself  
will dictate to us the propriety of refrain-  
ing, during the remainder of this day, from  
every thing that is inconsistent with the  
homage we have paid, or that may counter-  
act the effect of the lessons we have re-  
ceived. Yet, surely, such inconsistency may  
justly be charged on those, who pretend  
worthily to commemorate the blessings of  
creation with minds distracted with business,  
or roving on pleasure: or who, at the time  
they call to remembrance the common origin  
of all, forget the duties of compassion,  
kindness, and charity, which the recollec-  
tion of that is so fitted to inculcate; whose  
celebration of that day on which, by the  
resurrection of their Saviour, life and im-  
mortality were brought to light, and a  
future judgement of all men assured unto  
us, is accompanied with an eager pursuit of  
what is most capable of banishing all serious  
reflection, with employments little calcu-  
lated to enable us to appear with hope be-  
fore

SERM. fore His tribunal. To the follies of such,  
 X. indeed, some bounds are happily set by the  
 laws of our country: still there remains  
 sufficient space within them, to give many  
 an opportunity of declaring, by the avidity  
 with which they seize it, that not religious  
 principle, but human laws, restrain them,  
 and of enhancing their guilt, by offering  
 the insult more particularly to Heaven, in  
 “ turning their feet from the sabbath, and  
 doing their own ways, finding their own  
 pleasure, and speaking their own words  
 thereon.”

Thus our laws have wisely and piously  
 prohibited the exhibition of spectacles, the-  
 atrical entertainments, and publick assem-  
 blies for amusement on this day, yet there  
 are who strive on it to supply the place of  
 these, by turning their own houses into  
 places of publick resort for diversions little  
 suited to the holiness of the sabbath, and  
 endeavour to defend their practices by those  
 of the countries that are still overrun with  
 the errors of Rome. Is it then already  
 forgotten,

forgotten, that we left that communion on account of the corruptions it had contracted? SERM.  
X.

Or are the members of a reformed church likely to improve, or become more vicious, by imitating the practices of the mother of apostacy? Or, lastly, Do the consequences of their past conduct encourage you to enter on the same that her adherents have pursued? Has the general depravity of Italy and France produced such effects as to render us desirous of experiencing the same? Or, rather, Have not their transgressions of the law of the Lord been visited with a severity sufficient to make us tremble at the thought of bringing down similar judgments on ourselves?

When I say that there are those who turn their houses into places of publick resort for diversion on the Lord's day, I allude not only to such as, with a bolder step in profanation, and, consequently, with more exceeding folly, spread their card tables for the amusement, or the profit of that contemptible generation, who cannot find in

SERM. their hearts to observe one day in seven as  
X. the holy of the Lord, and honourable, nor  
bring their debilitated minds to rest content  
without recurring to their accustomed mode  
of wasting that which all the wise and the  
good deem so precious; but to all who,  
under the pretence of sacred musick, or any  
other excuse, collect large companies, by  
whom the indulgences of vanity, the parade  
of dress, and the mere dissipation of thought  
and avoidance of reflection, in the language  
of the text, the finding their own pleasure,  
and the speaking their own words, are  
sought. For, let the supposed purpose of  
these meetings be what it may, the question  
to be considered by the promoters of them  
is, What they do in reality prove? and if  
they are perverted to places of intrigue, or  
even made merely scenes of dissipation, the  
sabbath is broken by them, the holy day  
of the Lord profaned, and one of the earliest  
of the divine commandments trampled un-  
der foot. But if the epithet of sacred be  
employed only to blind the eyes of men, to  
evade the laws, or elude the vigilance of  
the

the magistrate; Are these deceivers weak SERM.  
enough to forget, that the Lord searcheth X:  
the reins and the heart? Can they suppose  
that He who hath declared, that “He will  
bring every work into judgement, whether  
it be good or bad, that there is nothing hid  
that shall not be known, and that what is  
spoken in the chambers shall be proclaimed  
upon the house tops,” is to be mocked by  
their hypocritical assumption of a name to  
cover their disregard of His will?

Let all, then, who make a publick day  
of the sabbath, reflect, with a fair and  
honest heart, to which description of men  
the practisers of this may most justly be  
said to belong, to those who call it a de-  
light, the holy of the Lord, honourable,  
and honour Him; or to those who do their  
own ways, and find their own pleasure in  
it? and according to the answer which truth  
and common sense shall dictate to this ques-  
tion, let them shape their future conduct.



SERM. Neither is this admonition called for by  
X. the behaviour of the higher ranks only,  
many of the middle and the lower seem no longer to think that that of the sabbath is a religious institution, but use it as a day of diversion and voluptuous indulgence. Can any man, then, think this a proper use of our Christian liberty, to employ the holy of the Lord in the transgression of His laws? I am not ignorant that in excuse of such there is urged, the want of recreation after six days application, and the like: But to what amount these pleas when we are particularly admonished that such is not the use of the day? Rest is the proper remedy for fatigue both of body and mind; and this is what we are, on this day, commanded to take: and so far are the duties of it from interfering with it, that, I think, I may venture, without danger of just contradiction, to assert, that those who spend the Sunday properly will be much more ready to return to their accustomed occupations on the next day with spirit, diligence,  
and


and effect, than any who have consumed it SERM.  
either in mere idleness, or in riot, or in X.  
forbidden indulgences. If men wish to  
travel for the satisfaction of visiting their  
friends, or any other purpose, surely a little  
extraordinary exertion will enable them to  
do this at proper intervals on some other  
day: But is not dedicating the sabbath to  
these purposes, like taking of the burnt-  
offering of the Lord to make merry with  
one's friends?

Neither, indeed, can we go to any distance  
from our homes without obliging our cattle  
to labour on this day, which, under the  
commandment of our common Creatour, to  
let them rest, is as manifest an instance of  
unjustifiable tyranny as the world exhibits.  
Yet how are our publick roads crouded on  
the sabbath with people seeking their own  
pleasures, and forcing on the poor animals,  
over whom they have obtained a temporary  
command, a double task; and thus, How  
is the worship of God deserted in some  
places, to mock at His commandments in  
others!

SERM. others ! Indeed, for some years past, those  
 X. who have lived at all within reach of one  
 of the royal residences, have had set before  
 them a particular temptation to leave their  
 parish churches during the summer season,  
 that they may, in the evening, be present  
 at a splendid assemblage with musick : and  
 although we cannot justify, we may well  
 pity those who yield to such allurements ;  
 while we must lament that want of counsel,  
 which permits a practice not only directly  
 contrary to the principle of repeated pro-  
 clamations, which the piety of our sovereign  
 has caused to be issued, but subversive of  
 the sabbath, and, consequently, most surely  
 destructive of the morality of the people.

This last particular, the corruption I  
 mean, of those about us, although made the  
 object of the severest menaces of the Gospel,  
 as, “ It is impossible but that offences will  
 come : but woe unto him, through whom  
 they come ! It were better for him that a  
 millstone were hanged about his neck, and  
 he cast into the sea, than that he should  
 offend

offend one of these little ones." (Luke xvii. SERM. 2, 3.) is, alas! by many, scarcely con-<sup>X.</sup> sidered as a thing of which they must give account; Otherwise would the Lord's day be chosen by them for a day of banquet and parade? by which their domesticks are deprived of the opportunity of repairing to the church, and of instruction in the law of their God; and having the little they ever did learn, gradually obliterated from their minds, they are left to an unequal struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, without knowing where to apply for spiritual assistance, and even without being conscious how much they stand in need of it. That heads of families, who having themselves made shipwreck of faith, "are taken captive by the devil at his will," should exact from their servants all their labours on the sabbath, is no matter of surprise; but that any who yet continue to assemble with the church, should imagine that the sacrifice of prayer and praise which they offer can be accepted, while, by their impious demands, others, who have their

SERM. falvation to work out, are deprived of the  
X. benefit of reforting to the congregation, or  
 obliged to forego the reft which God hath  
commanded, affords, upon reflection, little  
lefs wonder than regret.

But while we warn thofe who have others  
under their command, not to bring down  
on themfelves the woes with which all are  
menaced, who caufe any of the believers in  
Chrift to offend; let not their confcioufnefs  
of being guiltlefs in this particular, en-  
courage others to continue in tranfgreffion  
under that partial confolation, that they hurt  
nobody but themfelves. For is not this  
plea made ufe of by thofe who do bufinefs  
in their own perfons on the Lord's day,  
without requiring the affiftance of their  
fervants? Or if, for their perverfe difobe-  
dience, fuch perfons be caft out from the  
kingdom of Heaven, will the reflection that  
they hurt nobody but themfelves, recom-  
penfe the lofs they have incurred? Many  
there are, I fear, who want to have this  
impreffed on their minds; and, perhaps,  
ftill



still more, who have taken up an imagination, that no business but that of manual labour amounts to a breach of the sabbath, ought to have their attention called to the words of the text, “not doing thine own ways, nor speaking thine own words:” for what can more strongly express the pursuit of any temporal interest, or more earnestly prohibit buying, selling, making of bargains, or, indeed, treating of any worldly affairs, that do not necessarily require immediate attention. True it is, that this very exception leaves men a very considerable space in which they may exercise their own discretion; but then it is theirs to remember, that they are in this, as well as in every other instance, acting under the eye of Omniscience, and deciding how far they shall let a present advantage lessen the respect they shew to that Being, Who has declared, that “they that honour Him, He will honour, and they that despise Him, shall be slightly esteemed.”

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X.  


To

SERM.

X.

to the advantage of either a nation or an individual to slight the divine commandments, is one of the most absurd conceptions that ever entered the human brain; equally contrary to the dictates of common sense, and the doctrine of the Gospel. That real success in life can be procured by insulting the Lord of life, or the wrath of God avoided by betraying a want of that quality which He requires as necessary before all others, implicit faith in His perfection, are fancies of which even a child would discern the folly. Yet are not such fancies acted on when the observation of the sabbath is made to give way to councils of state and political conferences; or, among individuals, to the settlement of accounts, or the forming plans of trade?

We seem lately to have found, that even our comparative degree of faith, piety, and religious obedience, small as it in substance is, hath profited us much; since the divine mercy hath turned from us the full stream  
of

of that torrent of calamities that has de- SERM.  
luged so many countries around us : even X.  
the measure in which we are reformed from  
the sins of Rome, seems, through the wonderful forbearance of Him Who seeketh occasion to shew mercy, to have saved us from partaking in many of her plagues. What benefits, then, should we not reap, were we to make a proper use of this forbearance, and by turning wholly to our God, and striving, in singleness of heart, to learn and to obey His commandments, were to obtain not only (as we may well fear at present) an adjournment, but a release from our sentence !

This national and effectual reformation, however, can never take place as long as the young and the ignorant are taught, by the example of those above them, to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Nay, so long as they are encouraged to slight the ordinance of the sabbath, they will become less steady in their faith, less scrupulous in their practice. The impressions of religion  
on

SERM. on our minds are naturally diminished by  
X. conversation with the world, the awe of  
God naturally lessened by attention to things  
visible, and, consequently, they would be  
quite effaced, if we did not occasionally take  
measures to renew these impressions. Re-  
collect the confession made in their last mo-  
ments, by numbers who have fallen victims  
to their country's justice, that their abuse  
of the leisure of this day hath been the first  
cause of their dismal fate; and ye will easily  
believe, that no small portion of that dis-  
honesty, profligacy, and brutality, which  
render many of the lower ranks the pests  
of society, is, in truth, owing to the en-  
creased neglect of this holy day. Or mark  
those of higher order, who presume to do  
their own ways thereon; and will ye not  
find their lives stained with debauchery, or  
their hearts tinged with infidelity? Even  
to stem, therefore, the progress of vice, and  
prevent our country from becoming a scene  
of such licentiousness as must call down the  
vengeance of Heaven on it, treat the sab-  
bath henceforth as the holy of the Lord,  
and

and honourable. And when wishing to find SERM.  
your own pleasure, or speak your own X.  
words thereon, try the value of the excuses  
that may present themselves to your mind,  
by comparing the conduct they would lead  
you to with the first and great command-  
ment, and ask, whether evading or quibbling  
on the will of your Creatour, or even ven-  
turing on what you may doubt is acceptable  
before Him, be, in truth, consistent with  
loving Him with all your heart, with all  
your soul, with all your mind, and with all  
your strength?"





## SERMON XI.


ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

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ST. MARK XII. 29, 30.

*And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment.*

THE very disproportionate attention paid SERM.  
to this commandment, in comparison XI.  
with the impressive terms in which it is  
delivered, may, in part, be attributed, it  
should seem, to the very little pains which  
Christians take to make themselves ac-  
quainted

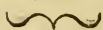
SERM. acquainted with the Holy Scriptures. For,  
XI.  could men who had ever fresh in their recollection those words of the Lord which I have just read to you, “ The *first* of all the commandments is”—and “ This is the *first* commandment,” be easily brought to think themselves in a state of salvation, while they neglect the practice of this first precept, provided they keep the second? This strange imagination does, however, daily betray itself in a thousand instances: we see men who appear estranged from every office of devotion, who scruple not to make light of many of the lessons of the Gospel, committing those things to which they threaten the severest punishments, and who even do not hesitate to profane the name of the Lord, perfectly at ease as to their spiritual state; and this, because they have, as they say, (but very falsely, I conceive) done no evil to their neighbour: and yet were ye, before these men, to plead for the pardon of a murderer, because he had not committed adultery, they would ridicule the absurdity, and justly  
censure

censure the impudence of the defence; SERM. though, in fact, parallel to what they them- XI. selves set up; when in excuse of their transgression of the first, they urge their attention to the second great commandment. The terms, too, under which such characters are often spoken of, are no less objectionable than their defence; they are frequently called (shame to such abuse of language) *good moral* men, while, in truth, they are living in constant breach of the highest possible moral obligation. For consider, (what thousands who use the words probably never adverted to) What is a moral obligation, but that which arises from the nature we possess, and the relation we bear to any being? Is not, then, the relation we bear to our Maker, necessarily prior, in all respects, to every other? And must not, consequently, the obligation arising from it, be likewise superior to every other obligation? Here let those who affect to profess, that though they will not submit to what those whom they call enthusiasts, or devotees, consider as the duties of religion, they will

SERM. scrupulously avoid every departure from  
XI. morality, learn, that not to render to God  
the homage and universal obedience due  
unto Him, is a departure from morality.  
For by not accepting this lesson, they will  
demonstratively prove against themselves,  
that all their former reasoning was grounded  
on hypocrisy; and that, in reality, they are  
willing to discharge those parts of their  
duty alone, the practice of which is not  
unpleasing to themselves. But is God to  
be thus mocked? And after He has so won-  
derfully and so mercifully dissipated, by the  
light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, that  
cloud of ignorance and superstition in which  
the nations were enveloped, and by making  
the several parts of our duty the subject of  
His express commands, placed them so be-  
fore our eyes that we cannot, but through  
sinful negligence, mistake them, Will He  
suffer the perverse disobedience of men to  
escape His justice, under the covert of their  
shallow sophistry? If ye cannot think thus  
unworthily of the divine perfection, let your  
attention now be fixed for a while on this  
first




first and great commandment, while I endeavour to lay before you that conduct by which alone we can comply with it, and alone perform our duty toward Him in ‘ an acceptable manner.’

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XI.  



“ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” Such are the words of the law! In the investigation of which, the first particular that demands our consideration is, that it is not delivered in the general terms, “ Thou shalt love God,” but with particular mention of the name of Him who is God alone, “ the Lord thy God ;” that is, in the original tongue, Jehovah : and it seems to be thus limited both on account of the imaginary deities, against the worship of which the people of Israel were so strongly cautioned, and that when it should, in due season, be preached among the Gentiles, it might not leave them, through the vagueness of the notion it conveyed, to worship, as our Lord charged the Samaritans,


SERM. tans, they knew not what. In truth,

XI.  those self-deceivers who assume to themselves the name of deists, by refusing to acquaint themselves with God through His revelation of Himself, reserve no small liberty in forming their notions concerning His will; and, consequently, find no difficulty in affirming, that they love God, and act consistently with that love, while they are, in reality, trampling on His laws. But the Holy Scriptures, on the contrary, call on us to love the Deity, under the specifick character of Jehovah, the God of Israel, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and take away all ground for feigned pretences, and false professions of that love, by resolving the proof of it into the single question, "Whether we keep His commandments?" and thus is there opened unto us a more immediate communication with Heaven, and we have only to read, or hear, and practise, and we shall be assured that our lives are passed in the service of our Creatour, because "we know what we worship:" and having a more distinct ob-  
ject

ject proposed for our attachment, we can, SERM.  
with greater confidence, contemplate not XI.  
only His works, but all the wondrous acts  
of His mercy and righteousness, made  
known to us in the words of His revela-  
tion; and thus render the degree of love  
required by the text, not so much the pro-  
duce of conscientious obedience, as the na-  
tural fruit of our own feelings.

But can love, perhaps ye would here ask, be properly a subject of command? Possibly not, if its effects are to be confined only to the mind; but if they are to be manifested by outward acts, it clearly may: and such is the meaning of the text, that we employ all the faculties therein mentioned in the works of the love of God. How this may, and must be done, if we would avoid the penalties of disobedience, let us next consider! First for our heart, that being the seat of the affections, to practise the love of God with that, we must endeavour to fix our inclinations on what He points out as the proper objects of our

SERM. attachment. Nor is this so difficult to be  
XI. done as some may at first imagine: for  
 since the prospect of happiness naturally  
excites desire, if we will but permit either  
our thoughts to be turned, by the hourly  
instances of mortality before us, to that  
scene of everlasting felicity beyond the  
grave, which the sacred writings describe  
to us under images so strong and so various :  
or our minds to be instructed by what passes  
in the world, in the superior peace, security  
and comfort enjoyed by those who live in  
the faith and fear of God, or consider the  
amiable character and esteem which they  
possess, who in singleness of heart, walk  
according to the laws He hath set before  
us, our inclinations cannot but be raised in  
favour of these several particulars which  
He has commanded us to seek. And the  
eternal things which are not seen, the life,  
the happiness, the glory promised in another  
world, the unshaken confidence in the pro-  
vidence of God, enjoined to every disciple  
of the Gospel, and the undefiled hands, and  
pure intentions, required in the Christian  
character,

character, will infallibly interest our hearts SERM.  
in favour of what so naturally and so plainly XI.  
deserve regard. 

True it is, that to produce this attachment in the breasts of most men, a very great change must be wrought in them, since it scarcely comes into all their thoughts. What is in their eyes most worthy of pursuit, may, with sufficient certainty, be collected from what they seek with most earnestness themselves, and what they point out to their children as calling for their principal attention. Without doing any injustice to the generality of those who now call themselves Christians, I conceive I may assert, that the good things of this world are much more earnestly sought after by themselves, and the attainment of them more attended to in the education, and setting forth of their children in life, than the reward of righteousness promised in that which is to come. Of many it may, I am afraid, be with truth affirmed, that until they think themselves certainly about to leave the present  
R 4 scene,



SERM. scene, they never seriously apply their  
 X'. thoughts to what is to be expected in the  
 next. Though living now, and dependent  
 for what shall be hereafter, on the bounty  
 of Him Who is Lord of this world, and  
 of that which is to come, Does not the  
 eagerness with which they pursue the pleasures,  
 or the honours, or the riches of the present  
 state, declare, that it is not He, but these,  
 that they love with all their hearts? How  
 then are such men obedient to this first and  
 great commandment? If two objects of  
 attachment be set before us, one of which  
 we love with all our hearts, (and but one,  
 it is plain, we can love in this degree)  
 surely our affection for this one will immediately  
 so manifest itself as to leave no doubt  
 which it is we prefer. By this rule, then,  
 let us judge ourselves; assured, that as long  
 as our sense of duty, and our inclinations,  
 can maintain an opposition to each other,  
 we love not God with all our hearts. For  
 thus will a check be provided for that  
 unreasonable ardour with which we pursue  
 those phantoms of pleasure that beguile us  
 into

into forgetfulness of the heavenly country to SERM.  
which we are at present on our way. Could XI.  
the self-devoted victims of dissipation once  
be brought to ask themselves, in the midst  
of their career, Whether the eagerness with  
which they seek after amusement be com-  
patible with loving Him with all their  
hearts, whose commandment it is that they  
should live soberly, and walk circumspectly  
in this world? Surely the answer which  
even the measure of wisdom and of con-  
science they possess would return to this  
question, would manifest to them the la-  
mentable error of their ways, by convict-  
ing them, from their own mouths, of dis-  
obedience to the chief precept of His law.  
Indeed, (for a repetition may be excused on  
a subject that ought to be most deeply im-  
pressed) the very existence of the question  
includes the answer to it; for did we love  
the Lord with all our hearts, our attach-  
ment to His service would admit of no  
comparison with our affection for any other  
object: but we should, with His apostle,  
count

SERM. count all things but loss for the excellency  
 XI. of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

I mean not to say, that this attachment can, in a degree to render it worthy the name of real, be suddenly gained, but it may and must be formed during the course of the life of every real Christian; and when once it is so, and, like every other ruling passion, swallows up the rest, think what it must be to have your hearts fixed not on any thing changeable, not on any thing perishable, but on the summit of perfection, from which ye can never be separated, with which ye can never be cloyed!

It is with all our *soul*, that we are next commanded to love the Lord our God. By which precept our moral faculties are required to be dedicated to His service; the necessity of which injunction is most clearly shewn by the behaviour of that generation whom I before mentioned as making a distinction between morality and religion. For  
 the

the moral faculties of these men, their temperance, their benevolence, and even their piety, are employed not in the service of the Lord our God, Who hath commanded all men, as they honour Him to honour His Son also, but in a mad attempt to prove, that men can rise as near to perfection without attending to the directions He has been pleased to give them by revelation, as they can by living according to His express command. Yet if such commandment has been given, How can they love God with all their souls, whose souls are not employed in the works of that commandment? To have our souls thus employed, all things must be done to His glory, and our self-restraint is not to be limited by the care of health, or worldly prudence, but by the words of His will. Our benevolence must not be merely the result of the feelings of compassion, in blindly following which we may as often minister to vice as support the cause of righteousness, but the natural fruit of a settled purpose to use His gifts in the manner most acceptable in His sight, most

SERM.  
XI.  
con-

SERM. conducive to His glory : neither must our  
XI. piety be the mere effect of custom, or what  
is still worse, the work of ostentation ; but  
the produce of our consciousness of His  
greatness, and our utter dependence on His  
power and goodness. By some, indeed, it  
may be thought, that if men are brought  
to practise these virtues from any motive  
whatever, a great point is gained. And  
true it is, that if we estimate the generality  
of the world as they really are, to prevail  
on them to live soberly, righteously, and  
godly, seems a thing more to be wished  
than hoped for, while great would be the  
benefit thence accruing to society, if they  
were to do so, even on lower motives. But  
the divine power is not limited by our con-  
ception, nor is it solely the present good of  
human society that is sought by the Gospel,  
but the future salvation of every individual,  
his improvement, his exaltation, which must  
depend upon the height, and the purity of  
his principles. Now the purest, the noblest  
of all principles, is, without controversy,  
the love of the summit of perfection, which  
not



not only casteth out fear, but, like the fire SERM.  
which fell from Heaven on the sacrifice of XI.  
Elijah, and consumed even the water, the  
stones and the dust, purifies the soul from  
every ignoble affection, and sanctifies it to  
the service of the one everliving God.


The commandment proceeds,—“ And  
with all thy mind :” a phrase which points,  
I conceive, to our mental faculties, and can  
be obeyed only by employing them in the  
works of our divine Master. That they are  
not so employed by that portion, that great  
portion, alas ! of the human race, whose  
whole care it is to gain, or to encrease their  
worldly substance, is but too plain. Let  
me not, however, be here understood as  
suggesting, that this law is transgressed by  
men who use due exertions to support them-  
selves, and provide for their families, ac-  
cording to the line of life in which they  
are placed. These are employments assigned  
us by Heaven itself, and such, too, as are  
made the subjects of other divine precepts :  
for we are told, that he who provides not  
for

SERM. for those of his own house, is worse than  
XI. an Heathen ; and are exhorted to labour at  
the thing that is honest, not only to preserve  
us from any temptation to steal from others,  
but so far as to have wherewithal to give to  
him that needeth. But those love not God  
with all their minds, whose endeavours are  
not regulated by His laws. Whether, for-  
getting that man liveth not by bread alone,  
they pass their days in sordid anxiety,  
planning and pursuing schemes to augment  
their store. Or whether with less solicitude,  
but at least equal disregard to the divine  
will, they gain their subsistence by means  
contrary to the pure precepts of the Gospel.  
And how much farther from this must  
they be, who, enlisting themselves under  
the banners of Antichrist, with determined  
impiety, employ what abilities they have in  
spreading the darkness of infidelity around  
them, and with crafty misrepresentation,  
and malicious sophistry, impose upon the  
ignorant, mislead the weak, and encourage  
the vicious in transgression ! These enemies  
of all righteousness, while calling them-  
selves

selves lovers of wisdom, are incessantly SERM.  
labouring to serve the cause of folly; while XI.  
stiling themselves friends of truth, are most  
anxiously promoting falsehood; and while  
boasting of themselves as the enlighteners  
of mankind, are enticing them to wander  
into the dreary shades of utter darkness;  
and therefore when the light His self shall  
appear, these will be found haters instead  
of lovers of God.

But let it not be so with you: let, on the  
contrary, your recollection of the rank of  
being in which your Creatour has vouch-  
safed to place you, giving you a superiority  
over so many of His creatures, and endow-  
ing you with faculties capable of unlimited  
improvement, let gratitude for these great  
gifts, I say, produce in you sufficient love  
of God to induce to use your abilities not  
as the dissipated, in disgracing the species  
to which ye belong, by putting on the  
appearance of being incapable of receiving  
gratification from any thing but trifles or  
licentiousness; neither in what will sub-  
ject


SERM. ject you to a still heavier condemnation, in  
XI. devising mischief against your neighbour,  
in wreaking your malice on those with whom ye are offended, or in corrupting the innocent, or seducing the unwary from the paths of righteousness; nor, lastly, should your station in life enable you to become a blessing or a curse on a larger scale, in exciting civil dissensions, promoting wars, or forwarding the destruction of mankind, but in learning rightly to divide the word of truth, and rendering yourselves wise unto salvation. The heart and the mind mutually affect each other; when, therefore, men become corrupted in their affections, their understandings grow gradually distorted, the soundness of their judgement fails, and their power of distinguishing truth from falsehood is impaired; to avoid this melancholy state of mental imbecility, under which such multitudes, unconscious of their own miserable fate, actually labour, the faculties of the mind should be early secured on the side of righteousness, by being employed in the search and the support  
of

of truth. But this point more properly be- SERM.  
longs to the next head, that portion of the XI.  
commandment which enjoins us to love the   
Lord “ with all our strength.”

A remark made early in this discourse, that by being commanded to love God with these several faculties, we are enjoined to employ them in the works of His love, will explain what is intended by loving Him with all our strength. Since to employ this in His service, we must practise His laws while we are yet in the vigour of our age, in the prime of our lives. And a very little observation of the conduct of mankind is sufficient to evince, how necessary it is to remind them of this part of their duty. For is it not, in truth, a very considerable proportion of men, who never think of submitting to the restraints of religion till their bodily strength begins to decay? And can this be called loving God with all our strength? Or are the reliques, instead of the first fruits of His own gifts, *all* that ye can bring yourselves to offer Him?

VOL. II. s Him?



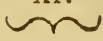
SERM. Him? “ Offer such now to thy Govern-  
XI. nour; Will he be pleased with thee, or  
accept thy person?”

These are questions which merit the most serious consideration of both young and old: of the old, that if conscious to themselves of having neglected this commandment, they may, if place for repentance can yet be found, prove their remorse for their past negligence sincere, by exerting, with redoubled earnestness, the portion of strength they have left, in the cause of piety, righteousness, and charity. Of the young, that they may not be deluded to waste in folly and the service of vice that strength which has been given them no less for the glory of their Maker than for their own accommodation, and thus lay up for themselves the sad inheritance of anguish and remorse, when the days in which they must die drawing near, they can no longer avoid the reflection, that they are about to be called to render account of the use they have made of the faculties, which their Lord committed  
to

to their care. Most pitiable is the sight SERM.  
often exhibited by those who having mis- XI.  
spent the years of their youth, can draw  
little from the recollection of what is past,  
but anxiety and dread of the future: and a  
comparison of the wretched state of these  
with that of those who from their youth  
have served the Lord, joined to the recol-  
lection of how few do in fact attain to re-  
pentance in old age, would tend to prevent  
the young from being deluded into trans-  
gression, under the distant hope of recover-  
ing themselves by future repentance; or  
from being tempted to part with their inno-  
cence by any of those pleas which the world  
is so ready to find for all that will comply  
with her corruptions, but which are little  
better than mere impertinences, unless they  
can deliver the youthful sinner from the  
charge of having broken this first and great  
commandment, in not “ loving God with  
*all* his strength.”

Having thus generally stated the objects  
of this commandment, little more remains

SERM. for me than to observe to you, that there  
XI. cannot be either more or stronger motives  
for complying with it than we already  
possess. It is for perfection itself that our  
love is demanded: the personal obligations  
received by every individual among us from  
the same great Being, are not only incom-  
parably beyond any deserts we could have,  
but continued under perpetual provocations  
to withdraw them. While there is holden  
out to us the proffer of still greater benefits,  
if we will but render ourselves fit to receive  
them—What makes our returns, then, so  
inadequate to all these calls? Why are the  
beggary elements of the world, the objects  
of lust, pride, avarice, embraced with cease-  
less ardour, while our Creatour, Redeemer,  
Preserver, and constant Benefactor, sure re-  
ward, and everlasting recompence, is so  
coldly regarded? Various, possibly, are the  
excuses that suggest themselves to you for  
this conduct; and ye think them such as  
ye may safely rely on. Yet consider; Are  
they, indeed, such as ye shall dare to plead  
before the throne of Christ? If not, they  
can

can avail no further than to lull you into a SERM.  
false security for a few years longer, on <sup>XI.</sup>  
being awakened from which ye will be   
stricken with tenfold horror at finding  
yourselves irrecoverably lost! For it after  
being commanded to love the Father with  
all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our  
strength, it shall appear to the all-piercing  
eye of our Judge, that our heart, soul, mind,  
and strength, were otherwise engaged, Will  
it be the sentence of good or that wicked  
servants which must proceed from His un-  
erring lips upon us? Weigh well, I be-  
seech you, this question, ere it be too late;  
and having considered it, let your future  
conduct prove, that the love of God *dwelleth*  
in your hearts!





## SERMON XII.

ON THE RECIPROCAL DUTIES OF PARENTS  
AND CHILDREN.

---

EPHES. VI. 1, 2, 3, 4.

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

**A**MONG the presumptuous absurdities SERM.  
which modern sophists have uttered, XII.  
there is none more directly contrary to the  
precepts of the wisest men of antiquity,  
and even to those of the inspired penmen,  
s 4 than

SERM. than the shallow conceit which one wretched  
XII. pretender to depth of thought has ventured  
to bring forward, in advising parents to refrain from putting their children under restraint during the first years of their lives : and, indeed, there needs but a little observation added to a moderate degree of common sense, to discern, that the habits of the nursery, and the disposition there acquired, will sometimes attend a man through life ; while no doubt can reasonably be entertained, but that the influence of them continues, in many instances, where it is not observed. But without insisting upon the probability of this continuance ; a child that is left unrestrained during its earlier years, must either continue so until it comes to years of maturity, when it would be impossible to bring under controul passions so long accustomed to indulgence ; or must be earlier reduced to discipline, when the severity necessary for this purpose would cause a parent, who had, until then, shewn nothing but lenity, to appear altered in his regard toward the child whom he began to treat so differently :

differently: and would not this apparent SERM.  
change in the affections of the parent natu- XII.  
rally occasion a real one in those of the  
child, and thus destroy, at the root, that  
honour, which it would have been the hap-  
piness of the one to pay, and of the other to  
receive, had not the dictates of philosophy  
(falsely so called) contributed to interrupt  
the peace of both? And thus it will be  
found, by any one who really investigates  
the point, that the duties of parents and chil-  
dren are so truly, what the apostle does in  
the text consider them to be, reciprocal, that  
attention or neglect of them, on the one  
side, tends to produce the same on the other.  
While what are the habits of filial obedi-  
ence and domestick order, but the founda-  
tion of loyalty to our sovereign, and regu-  
larity of publick conduct. So truly such,  
indeed, that I think I may venture to say,  
that he who is not a good son, will scarcely  
ever prove a good subject; nor he who has  
been accustomed to disturb the tranquillity  
of a family at home, ever promote the peace  
of a community. The household of our  
parents

SERM. parents is the first society in which we appear: herein, then, must be formed the rudiments of our behaviour in those more enlarged ones, of which we may afterward become members; which particular manifests the accurate propriety with which the commandment, mentioned in the text, is placed at the head of those that relate to our duty toward our neighbours.

XII.

To the consideration of this commandment, as more extensively viewed by St. Paul, in the words before us, I shall first call your attention; meaning, afterwards, to speak of the behaviour which he directs parents to observe toward their children,

To honour, then, signifying, in its primary and most simple signification, to hold any thing in estimation, since we cannot do this without having our affections attached to it according to its nature, the precept to honour them necessarily includes that of loving our parents; the reality of which love will manifest itself by the conduct  
suited

fuited to the period of life in which we SERM.  
may be: for the fond endearments which XII.  
are so pleasing, and appear so amiable in an  
infant, would not only seem ridiculous, but  
be really disgusting and absurd in one of  
maturer years. Still there are testimonies  
of affection which we can shew in very  
early years, and of which we need not be  
ashamed when we are advanced in age.  
Such is the fear of giving uneasiness to a  
parent, which may often be discerned in  
very young minds, and if not destroyed  
by a course of indulgence, which makes  
nothing appear to give uneasiness, or  
by moroseness, which discourages all at-  
tempts to please, or eradicated by vice,  
which blunts all the finer affections, will  
make regard to the feelings of a parent a  
principle of action through life, serving as  
a salutary check to folly and intemperance,  
and, from the force of habit, retaining its  
power even when its object is no longer on  
earth.

On



SREM. On the other hand, what degree of real  
XII. affection can there be in the breast of a  
child who manifests not this symptom of it? When we see (as we too often do) the cautions of a parent disregarded, his apprehensions laughed at; when a mother's expression of her fears has no other effect on a shameless child, than to make him continue the very actions of which she dreads the consequence, What love can dwell in the heart of such a child? Or when he goes forth into the world, will the son, who has been accustomed to despise the words of those whom he was the most strictly bound to honour, shew more respect to others, than he was wont to do to his parents? Will he suddenly acquire new habits of attention and compliance? Or can he expect, that his past disobedience to the law of God will be rewarded by additional grace to preserve himself from what will bring on him disgrace and enmity from men? Much, it is true, may be pleaded in favour of the weakness and the inexperience of childhood, but there  
is

is nothing required of children to which SERM.  
the years at which it is required are not XII.  
equal, and therefore their want of compli-  
ance cannot be acquitted of guilt; nor  
parents of cruel negligence, who suffer such  
guilt to become habitual: for we have the  
authority of Solomon himself for saying,  
that though “ foolishness is bound in the  
heart of a child, the rod of correction shall  
drive it far from him.”

Neither should I omit to mention the  
extent to which the caution arising from  
this fear of offending reaches, embracing  
all that which may be termed the negative  
honour due to parents, that is, all those  
testimonies of esteem and respect, the omis-  
sion of which would be a dishonour to  
them. Because we are no longer under the  
immediate command of our parents, are we  
to consider ourselves as no more connected  
with them than with the rest of mankind?  
Are we to alter our plans without advising  
with them? Or change our situation in life  
without even imparting our intention to  
them? The having particulars of this kind

SERM. withholden from their knowledge, cannot  
 XII. but be very grating to parents, since it betrays either a contempt of their opinion, or a doubt of their affection. When we read that a “ foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him,” we are but reminded of what daily passes in the world through the behaviour of the extravagant, the idle, the dissipated, and the profligate. How many eyes are, at this moment, weeping over the follies or debaucheries of a dissolute son! How many cheeks are now bedewed with tears for the consequences of a daughter’s obstinacy and inattention to parental caution! And shall they be said to love father and mother, who thus embitter their last years by casting behind them their instructions; and by forsaking the paths of prudence and of virtue they had so earnestly endeavoured to mark out to them, contribute to bring their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?

True it is, I say, that the condemnation in which such are involved, is often, if not generally, derived from an habit of disobedience,

dience, early acquired, through the injudicious lenity and unkind indulgence of their parents : but as parents are so easily prevailed on to yield such indulgence, children who are capable of understanding the caution, should be warned of the fearful consequences of not accustoming themselves to pay a sincere and ready deference to the orders and admonitions of their parents : for correspondent to the promise on compliance with the precept, are the effects naturally resulting from the neglect of it ; and we may frequently trace miscarriages in life, poverty, disease, and even immature death, to disobedience to the lessons of a father, or to contempt of a mother's instructions. Let the dread of these consequences, therefore, the dread of their growing worse and worse, of their being left by the just sentence of God for transgressing His commandment to become more estranged from their duty, more hardened in evil, operate as a timely warning on young people to obey their parents in all things ; ever remembering that the practice of this obedience, in their early years,

SERM.

XII.

SERM. years, will be the best preparative, the surest  
 XII. of pledge of their giving to their parents  
 that honour which will afterwards be required of them.

And what is this? Our blessed Saviour's rebuke to the Scribes and Pharisees, that they made the commandment of God of none effect, by saying, that if a man declared what he might have given to his father or mother, dedicated to religious uses, he was free from the obligation of this law, sufficiently evinces, that this tribute of honour principally consists in ministering of our substance to their necessities. And how visibly equitable is this ordinance, by which we are directed to return some portion of that expence, care, and attention, which were bestowed on ourselves when we were even insensible of our own wants! If men would but recollect for what a course of years they were the objects of their parents most anxious care, during which not only their necessities, but their very amusements, were eagerly supplied, when their  
 their



their frowardness too, added to the burthen SERM.  
of their helplessness, they could scarcely re- XII.  
frain from repeating to themselves the ques-  
tion of the son of Sirach: "How canst  
thou recompense them the things that they  
have done for thee?" (Eccles. vii. 28.) Or  
fail to answer, that when their parents are  
sinking into an age in several respects similar  
to that during which themselves experienced  
all the benefits of their tenderest sollicitude,  
it is but a debt of gratitude to give them  
every assistance of which they may stand in  
need, whether that be pecuniary, or of any  
other kind. The former, indeed, neither a  
greater nor even an equal number of men,  
have an opportunity of administering, as  
their parents stand not in need of it; but to  
many, the opulence of whose parents frees  
them from any calls of this kind, it may  
properly be suggested, that if we are bound  
to assist those who do want, we certainly  
are no less so to abstain from reducing to  
difficulties, by our extravagance, those who  
had plenty. For how many do, in their  
later years, suffer from the riotous living

SERM. of a spendthrift son, and see the hardly-  
 XII. earned produce of their youthful labours  
 dissipated by the cruel folly of a stubborn child ! And is this a due return for all the sacrifices of time, money, and ease, that they have made for you ? Or is it honouring old age to plunge it into the hardships with which even youth finds it difficult to struggle ?

To those, indeed, whose sensibility is not entirely destroyed by commerce with the world, it is an heart-piercing sight to see a parent suffer, in any way, from the misdoings of a child : but how much more if it proceed, as (shocking to relate) it sometimes does, from personal ill treatment ! the unceremonious behaviour to which what is falsely called the good breeding of the present age is calculated to give rise, is sufficiently deficient in respect to be scarcely tolerable ; but when a greater degree of irreverence is shewn, every one acquainted with the Scriptures must be sensible, that a heavy sentence is incurred ; heavy, indeed, in proportion

portion to the advance made to that exceeding degree of guilt on which Moses was commanded to inflict the punishment of death: “ he that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.” (Exod. xxi. 17.) In which guilt it is manifest, from His own words, that our Lord deems those to participate, who, though they do not actually make use of words of execration, treat their parents as not entitled to the honour commanded: and strong are the terms of horror in which the wisest of men have spoken of transgressions of this kind. “ The eye (saith Solomon) that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.” And the son of Sirach; “ he that forsaketh his father is as a blasphemer, and he that angereth his mother is cursed of God.”

Still although we do in most interruptions of that constant exchange of affection and good offices which ought to be preserved

SERM. between parents and children, naturally, as  
 XII. it were, from the known strength of parental attachment, at first presume, that the latter are in fault; reflection and experience will convince us, that in no small number of cases the former are to blame, as having neglected to bring their children up in that admonition which would have produced the fruits of esteem and regard, besides other cases in which they have provoked them unto wrath.


It is the nurture and admonition of the Lord in which the apostle requires parents to bring up their children; and if, in consequence of the neglect of this precept, the latter do, by their behaviour, embitter the declining years of their parents, these do but suffer the natural penalty of not instructing their children in the fear of their heavenly Father; without which that of an earthly one will, by no means, prove sufficient to keep them in a conscientious discharge of their duty. And well would it be for such parents, if this were the worse  
 con-

consequence of their cruel neglect, and the ruinous effects of it did not extend beyond the production of temporal evils to the final destruction of their souls. But knowing this, as well as the anxious earnestness with which men naturally desire the happiness of their offspring, we might well be led at first to attribute the total omission of religious instruction, or the very little employment of it in the education of children, to an evil heart of unbelief; which considers the lessons of the Gospel concerning Heaven and Hell, and the certain roads to each, as mere fables. But although this may be the case in instances where we see the parents themselves living without God in the world, as we not seldom do both in the highest and lowest ranks of society, it cannot be so, where they sincerely hold the Christian faith, and endeavour, in all points but that before us, to regulate their conduct accordingly. To what, then, is this misconduct to be ascribed? In other cases the greatness of an evil is reasonably thought to make any the least risque of it unjustifiable. But

SERM.  
XII.  





SERM. what evil is equal to that of which the  
 XII. danger is here incurred? For “ what is  
 a man profited, if he shall gain the whole  
 world, and lose his own soul? Or what  
 shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”  
 Is, then, the advantage of better tuition in  
 the classical writers of Greece and Rome, is  
 the hope of forming some noble connec-  
 tion, or even that of obtaining a comfort-  
 able establishment in this life, to be put in  
 the balance against the everlasting destiny  
 of a child? and much less the indulgence  
 of a parent’s prejudice, or the gratification  
 of his vanity: and yet one or more of these  
 motives generally, I believe, sways those  
 who send their children to schools, where  
 it is known they are almost regularly initi-  
 ated into vice; and the urging of such mo-  
 tive is deemed a sufficient answer to the  
 suggestion, that there is imminent danger  
 of their morals being there corrupted. But  
 when this corruption does actually take  
 place, Can the parent who wilfully exposed  
 his son to it, justify himself from the charge  
 of being the primary cause of his offend-  
 ing?

ing? Among such as his self, perhaps, SERM.  
the flimsy plea of custom, and the like, or XII.  
the careless man's last excuse, " I never   
supposed it would happen," may be allowed  
as sufficient; but when before the throne of  
Christ, inquisition is made for the lost soul,  
what earthly maxims will avail against the  
express lessons of that Gospel, by the words  
of which, He has told us, we shall be  
judged?

So inestimably precious is the hope of  
again meeting our children in a state of  
happiness never to be separated from them  
more, that one would think no parent, to  
whom it had once occurred, could look  
without some degree of horror upon any  
thing which was likely to interfere with it;  
How much less, then, could any such but  
be stricken with terror at the least danger  
of passing the same endless ages in misery,  
aggravated by the cutting reflection, that  
his dearest connections are brought into the  
same place of torment, through his own  
too lightly regarding the one thing needful!

SERM. Yet our divine Judge has declared, that

XII.  "Whosoever shall offend one of the little ones that believe in Him, it is better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." And what human ingenuity can devise an argument to prove, that they are not guilty of causing their children to offend, who, after being warned of the dreadful consequences, send them where their innocence will be exposed to the severest attacks, and the feeblest assistance only be given them for its preservation?

I am not ignorant that in answer to what is thus most justly said against sending children to those seminaries, whose corruption is little less publick than their names, it is replied, that they may learn vice also in more private ones. Neither do I mean to dispute this assertion: but it is a parent's duty to entrust his son in those hands only where he has just reason to think, that this will be most honestly guarded against; and when he has thus far performed his part,  
should

should any evil happen, he not only will SERM.  
stand acquitted to himself, but will find, XII.  
that if his son do fall into offence, he will  
be sensible that he has sinned, and ashamed  
that he has done so, whence chance of re-  
pentance, and hope of amendment; whereas,  
in the other case, the multitude of compa-  
nions hardens the culprit, and he is taught  
to make a mock of sin, and even to plead  
for the harmlessness of transgressing some  
of the plainest and most express precepts of  
the Gospel; and that because a wonderful  
and horrible thing is done in our land; the  
profligate principles of the sensualist are in-  
troduced into the retreats of education: and  
thus the growth of vice is encouraged, and  
the seeds of infidelity sown in ecclesiastical  
foundations.

Neither, I am afraid, is the danger of  
corruption confined to schools where boys  
are sent: there is reason to think, from their  
fruits, that many of those of the other sex  
are so conducted as to be little better than  
seminaries of vice; and How shall the  
parent

SERM. parent be excused, who ventures the innocence of his daughter in such? It is to be hoped, indeed, that very few are the instances of what yet is known to have happened, the selling of beauty from such places; but can he who sends his child for the formation of her mind, where the infusion of religious principle is postponed to the acquirement of personal accomplishments, not to say meretricious arts, plead, that he has attended to the words of the apostle, and brought her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

I have so far spoken only to the very important obligations we lie under to use all possible circumspection in selecting those to whom we confide our children for instruction: of the care to be taken of their nurture when at home, I shall have occasion to speak in another discourse; in the present, it remains to notice the other caution of the apostle; “And ye, fathers, provoke not your children unto wrath:” of which caution the conduct of too many parents proves  
the



the necessity, and the consequences of that SERM.  
conduct the wisdom. For is it not some- XII.  
times seen, that even the tempers of young  
children are spoiled, and their affections  
alienated, by the unreasonable rigour, the  
passionate corrections, or the ceaselessly  
teazing rebukes of a parent? being perpe-  
tually remonstrated with for trifles, they  
grow inured to reproof, accustomed to be  
harshly treated, severity loses its effect on  
them, and as they gradually discover the  
little ground there was for many of the  
censures they have received, they gain pro-  
portionate esteem for the wisdom and equity  
of those who inflicted them. And on those  
of maturer age also, Do we not see the  
effects of the unreasonable demands, the  
furious anger, and the cruel obduracy of  
parents? By these, children who were sin-  
cerely inclined to pay every just attention,  
are sometimes impelled, as it were, to with-  
draw it, and keep at a distance from those  
who cannot distinguish between what may  
be required from infants, and what expected  
from those who have knowledge to guide  
them-

SERM. themselves, and business of their own to

XII. do. By these, children who have been once  
 drawn to offend, are thrown into such terror, that they dare not even ask forgiveness, but will cast themselves on the wide world, rather than encounter the indignation of a parent whose wrath is so fierce; and by these are they abandoned to that world, to pine away on its commiseration, or perish by its injuriousness, through want of the natural refuge of a parent's house. Does not, then, in these cases, as well as the former, sin lie at the parent's door, if not for originally causing his child to offend, yet for shutting the door of repentance against her? For is this the conduct of a servant of that Master who came to seek, and save that which was lost?

Finally, then, as that degree of indulgence is destructive, which banishes discipline, and prevents correction where it is really called for, so it should be remembered, that the ground of all our duties is love, and that consequently when this ceases  
 to

to be the motive from which we act, we SERM.  
are, in truth, transgressing; whereas, were XII.  
all parties to be sincerely influenced by this  
principle, the mutual exchange of good  
offices would call down the blessing of Him,  
who maketh men to be of one mind in an  
house; and thus the hearts of the children  
being turned toward the father, and those  
of the fathers towards the children, there  
would be neither an ill use of kindness or  
instruction on the one side, nor a neglect of  
imparting it on the other: and what a dif-  
ference would then manifest itself between  
the next generation and the present! For  
the commandment on which I have been  
speaking being generally obeyed, there not  
only would come forward into the world a  
numerous host practised in good habits, but  
the promise attached to the precept would  
be performed; and in lieu of fears of being  
disturbed in the possession of our land, we  
should have the most certain grounds of  
confidence, that our days would be long  
therein, by the abundant goodness of Him  
who has given it unto us.

**SER-**



# SERMON XIII.

ON FAMILY RELIGION.

---

MATT. v. 16.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they  
may see your good works, and glorify your  
Father which is in Heaven.*

ALTHOUGH there be, perhaps, no SERM.  
precept in the Scriptures, which, on XIII.  
repetition, more generally affects the hearers  
than this, yet, to our shame, it must be con-  
fessed, that its influence on the behaviour of  
the generality of those who call themselves  
Christians is scarcely perceptible. To en-  
deavour, by our conduct, to contribute to  
the glory of our Creatour, seems no more  
than a natural effect of gratitude for the  
being



SERM. being He hath given us, and the faculties  
XIII. and powers with which His bounty hath  
endowed us ; but to be commanded by His  
Son to do this, and be told, that to perform  
it is a duty especially assigned to us, is to  
be called to the post of honour, and invested  
with a character, not like the trifling distinctions of this world, known in one country, and unheard-of in another, but honourable throughout the universe, that of servants and ministers of its almighty Sovereign. Mark the expressive terms in which our Lord admonishes His disciples, that it is theirs to support this character, “ Ye are the salt of the earth ;”—“ Ye are the light of the world.” Then turn to yourselves, and ask, How far ye have attended to this admonition ? How faithfully ye have discharged the task thus laid upon you ? If ye have hitherto been deficient in your attention to it, or if, which is possibly the more common case of the two, ye have never considered it as at all incumbent on you, to strive, by your lives, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, advert, before  
it

it be too late, to the determination pro- SERM.  
nounced by our divine Judge, “ that when XIII.  
the salt has lost its favour, there remains  
nothing with which that can be seasoned,  
but it is thenceforth fit for nought but to  
be cast out, and to be trodden under foot :”  
and let your desire to avoid such a condem-  
nation induce you to give serious attention  
to my discourse, while I more amply state  
to you the doctrine of the text ; endeavour  
to correct any mistakes ye may hitherto  
have entertained concerning it, and strive to  
prevail on you henceforth to pay a constant  
regard to the practice of the duties it incul-  
cates.

That unpremeditated praise which the  
hearts of men spontaneously render on dis-  
covering the peculiar fitness of any work of  
Heaven to its place, will give us the best  
general notion of the means by which we  
may, through our conduct, cause men to  
glorify our heavenly Father. When they  
see us properly fill the stations in which we  
are placed, make a due use of the faculties

SERM. and powers with which we are entrusted,  
XIII. and sincerely perform the duties arising from  
~~~~~ the several relations in which we stand, they  
will naturally confess, that the endowments
with which we are gifted are well bestowed,
and thus do homage to the hand which
hath so conferred them. On the contrary,
there is nothing, ye know, more common
than to hear men repine when they see
others neglect or misuse the gifts of Heaven.
If a wealthy man be ungenerous, if a man
of abilities waste them in idleness, or use-
less pursuits, or any one who has the means
of doing service to individuals or society,
mispend his time or his powers, the censure
caused by the indignation which such mis-
behaviour excites, is frequently not restrained
to the offender, but passes on even to glance
at that Being, who suffers His gifts to be
so abused. What a pity such a man should
have riches! Men who will not make the
proper use of them ought not to be blest
with such powers and opportunities! These,
or the like, are the reflections cast on the
providence of our heavenly Father, when
those

those who partake of His bounty manifestly SERM.
neglect or betray the trust reposed in them; XIII.
and from the consideration of what a dif-
ferent behaviour thus produces, we may,
perhaps, more accurately discover what is
required of us in the command we have
received, to “ let our light so shine before
men, that they may see our good works;
and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.”

In the first place, it is clear, that the precept of the text is not to be restrained to any particular kind of good works, but to be extended to the discharge of all those duties, and the practice of all those virtues, of which the neglect might deservedly draw on us the censure of not making a becoming use of the powers and situation with which it hath pleased our Creatour to honour us: much less is it to be expounded according to the notion, perhaps unhappily encouraged in some by this passage being placed by our church at the beginning of the offertory, of almsgiving exclusively; since, in the performance of this species of good works,

SERM. we are warned to be so peculiarly secret, as
 XIII. not to let even the left hand know what the
 right hand doth : while an ostentatious display of any good practice whatever is very far from tending to make men glorify our heavenly Father ; since pride, vain glory, and a love of the praise of men, are known not to come from above.

But *there is* a manner of life, a mode of conversation, becoming all who have the knowledge of God, and the instructions of the Gospel to direct them ; and since it is incumbent on the creature to glorify the Creator, in proportion to the faculties with which the latter hath been pleased to endow him, it is the indispensable duty of Christians in particular, to walk according to the light which they have as men who are informed by divine authority, that a day is appointed in which they will be judged before the throne of God Himself, by those very laws which have been already delivered to them for their direction, and whose everlasting situation will then be irreversibly deter-

determined by the sincerity of the attention SERM.
they shall be found to have paid to what XIII.
they knew, or, but for their own criminal
negligence, might have known, was the
will of their Creatour—as beings who, in
addition to the common obligations conferred on all creatures by the blessings of creation and support, have received the inexpressible mercy of redemption through the Son of God, who has been made to them not only a sacrifice for sin, but also an ensample of a righteous life. Lastly, as beings likewise, who have the promise of the divine assistance to help their infirmities, and who therefore are deprived even of the excuse of weakness in failure of duty, since that weakness might always be remedied by proper application for the guidance and support of their heavenly Comforter.

Such is the situation in which the serious reflection, that it in wisdom behoves us to make on our own state, will convince us we really stand. And can ye think, that our own blindness, or our wilful ignorance,

SERM. can release us from the obligations arising
 XIII. from it? Will a man's not seeing his danger
 extricate him from it? Or if approaching a
 precipice, will shutting his eyes, without
 stopping or changing his course, secure
 him from falling? Neither, then, will our
 keeping at a distance the thoughts of the
 accompt to which we shall hereafter be
 called, prevent our being summoned to ren-
 der it; nor our putting off the day of re-
 flection defer, for a moment, the day of
 judgement.

Little as one would suppose men would
 be deficient in estimating the extent of the
 powers, and the importance of the talents
 entrusted to their care, they do, in fact,
 very often fail to consider how much influ-
 ence their own conduct has, or might have,
 on the comfort and the welfare of others.
 As the rebellion of one city would, in some
 measure, affect the tranquillity of a whole
 kingdom, so will the riotous state of one
 house that of a neighbourhood, and the
 disorderly behaviour of one member of it
 disturb

disturb that of a family ; whence it follows, to preserve universal subordination and perfect peace in a community, each family should cultivate the principles of these things within itself, and in performing this according to their several stations, is the first method by which individuals can glorify their Father which is in Heaven.

SERM.

XIII.

Having, in my last address, spoken to several points of the reciprocal duties of parents and children, and the compass of one discourse not permitting me to notice all the particulars that ought to be observed on even in a summary view of these, I shall take the present opportunity of mentioning some that were then omitted ; and since the mutual offices of masters and servants, if conducted, as they ought to be, with real charity, bear a strong likeness to the former, on these also I shall make such observations as respect the giving and accepting religious instruction, duties which properly fall under the subject before us, reserving what relates

SERM. to other points of their conduct to be noticed
 XIII. under their proper heads.

We read, that it was a recommendation of Abraham to the patronage of the Almighty, that “ God knew he would command his children and his household after him, and they should keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement.” Now although, through the overflowing bounty of God, this disposition drew down on the Father of the faithful the blessing of the everlasting covenant, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; yet the practice for which he was so amply rewarded, was no more than a strict duty, by the neglect of which any man would fail to fulfil his station, and would omit, in particular, the service which the text calls on us to perform, by neglecting one of the most effectual means of glorifying God on earth.


The first shoots of real righteousness among men must be sought for in the private

vate and domestick virtues ; in piety, sobriety, diligence, and affection ; and by the extension of these are produced good qualities, which are more publick and splendidly salutary ; but without these all shew of the others is mere simulation. If, then, we are ambitious of becoming instruments of happiness on a larger scale ; if we would be the ministers of God for good, on a more extended scene ; if we wish to lead thousands to glorify our Father which is in Heaven, we must begin with the cultivation of these more confined, and less observed virtues. For even thus, too, the kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which, though so small when sown, produces a plant under which the fowls of the air may roost. Beyond all estimate or conjecture is the good of which we may be the actual instruments, by early instilling the principles of faith, piety, and charity, into the minds of our children, who are naturally devout, and having no prejudices arising from a consciousness of guilt, or the love of vice, will, if they be delivered with
seriousness,

SERM.

XIII.

SERM. seriousness, mildness, and such plainness of
XIII. expression, as they can comprehend, readily
receive the things pertaining to the kingdom of Heaven; and by imparting to our servants those lessons of the same of which they stand in need; and by exhibiting to both the prevailing argument of our own example for the practice of them. Not only the personal escape from misery of any one of these our immediate pupils, in consequence of what they learn from us, and their obtainment of future happiness, (which is in itself infinite) are to be taken into the account, but the benefits done to all those whom they may hereafter teach, or influence to enter on the paths of righteousness; and even to those to whom this second, or any succeeding generation may prove useful instructors, whatever glory be derived to God, whatever good be done to men by all these, our exertions will participate in the production of it: while that loss of opportunity of thus contributing to an endless line of happiness, which is owing to our own negligence, must, in the guilt of it, in
some

some measure, be proportionate to the good SERM.
we might have done, had we thus per- XIII.
formed our duty. 

How great criminality, then, may justly be laid to the charge of parents, who fail to prepare their children early for the race of life, by teaching them in what their true interest consists, and directing their chief attention to that object which alone deserves it, an happy situation in the world that shall endure for ever: who, instead of making them acquainted with the words of eternal life, and accustoming them to read the holy Scriptures as alone containing them, instead of setting them an example of faith in, and devotion to God, by the regular use of family prayer, and by calling for His blessing on their food, by solemn thanksgiving at their meals, do, by living themselves without God in the world, (observing, I mean, no degree of that humble behaviour and reverend demeanour towards Him, which a just sense of being constantly under the eye of so great, so pure, so righteous a Being,

SERM. Being, must naturally produce) teach them

XIII. to make light of His commandments, to despise His menaces, and to neglect the rites, and break through all the restraints of religion. Consider, too, whether they partake not in the same guilt who having as servants in their houses the ignorant and uninstructed, do not strive to put them into the right way, either by admonition or example. The difficulties which some may imagine would attend the discharge of this duty, would, on a tryal, chiefly vanish, the most ignorant father of a family might repeat the Lord's prayer with his household, both at rising and going to rest: and all who are not too abandoned even to be retained in a Christian's service, would yield to the repeated exhortations, and constant example of a master, to pay a regular attendance in the church on the Lord's day, and to do nothing in the other hours of it unsuited to the holiness of the season. But since men naturally, as it were, catch the manners of those with whom they are most conversant, and since servants consider their
masters

masters as generally better informed than SERM.
themselves, when the master (as in too many XIII.
instances is visibly the case) seldom or never
enters the church to render the worship he
owes to his Creatour and Redeemer, is it
wonderful that the servant too manifests a
disregard for God and His laws? Or, when
at home, he discerns no symptom of piety,
but instead of a religious demeanour, is a
witness to conversation directly contrary to
that prescribed by the divine commandments,
Can we be surprized, that he lays aside all
attention to laws, which he sees those imme-
diately above him so constantly neglect, or
despises restrictions which they so daringly
break through? Whereas would men, on
the contrary, obey the precept of the text
in the particulars I am now urging, and
strive to be lights to those around them, to
direct them to glorify God, their children
accustomed, from their infancy, to regularity
of life, instructed in the principles of reli-
gion, taught to walk in the fear of God,
and to look up to Him for protection, and
introduced in due time to the table of their
Saviour,

SERM. Saviour, (a point of inestimable importance)

XIII. would be prepared to set forth in life as believers in Christ, and members of His church, and not be easily drawn to desert, or disgrace the faith, or to barter their hopes of glory and happiness in the future state, for any gratifications offered them in this : and their servants be freed, partly by what they would be taught at home, partly by what they would learn in the church, from that deep and lamentable ignorance, which is now, in no small measure, the cause of their Irregularities, their vices, and their ingratitude. And thus would they justify before men the goodness of God to themselves, in placing them in situations where they have power and influence over others, they would cause Him to be glorified by those to whom He would thus have occasion to shew His farther bounty, because they would not disgrace the hand that blest them ; while they, likewise, in their turn, might influence others to walk in the paths of salvation, whence still more instruments of His glory would be raised up, since He sheweth mercy
unto

unto thousands in them that love Him, and keep His commandment. And we having thus caused Him to be glorified on earth, should in Heaven reap the reward of our labours, not only in the sight of that happiness to which we had led others, but in the declared approbation and inestimable blessing of our Father which is in Heaven.

SERM.
XIII.


From what has been stated, however, of the duties of parents and masters, it is not to be presumed, that children and servants have no part to act in causing men to glorify God. If they receive not with readiness the instruction offered, either by the word of mouth, or by example, they fail to give others that opportunity of glorifying their father which is in Heaven, that they would yield were they to prove to men, that the means of improvement they have, were given to such as were not too bad to make a grateful use of them. And even in cases where their parents or masters neglect them, it is still their duty to use every other mean that may offer, of gaining necessary know-

SERM. knowledge, and every care not to leave any
 XIII. thing undone, which they may even suspect
 to be their duty, and not to do any thing
 that they may doubt to be right. For Are
 we not taught, that while all who know
 God's will, and do it not, shall be beaten
 with many stripes, even those who know it
 not, shall be beaten with few stripes, if they
 do things worthy of them?

Let the condemnation, then, which thus
 awaits the less guilty, have its just effect
 on all parties; and as we dread suffering
 ourselves under any portion of the divine
 wrath, either for being the cause of others
 suffering, or for crimes which rest only on
 ourselves, let us consider the necessity of
 immediately entering on the practice in-
 cluded under the injunction of the text:
 the higher the character in which that places
 us, the greater will be our disgrace, the
 heavier our punishment, the more acute our
 misery, when in another state it becomes
 manifest what honours we have forfeited,
 what favours we have rejected, what hap-
 piness

pinefs we have loft; when we find that to ^{SERM.}
that to which we might have contributed ^{XIII.}
by our happinefs, but would not, we are
yet forced to contribute by our misery, fince
the Lord hath made all things for Himfelf,
even the wicked for the day of evil.

The favage who hath exerted himfelf
according to his knowledge, and hath, with
fimplicity and diligence, employed his time
and his powers in the task his fituation
imposed on him, may in that day rife up in
judgement againft thofe who have heard
the Gofpel, yet neglected to lead others by
that fobriety, righteoufnefs and godlinefs,
which it recommends, to glorify the eternal
Father of all. Think, therefore, what it
will then be to fee many who enjoyed
much lefs knowledge, much fewer means
of improvement than ourfelves, come from
the eaft, and from the weft, from the north,
and from the fouth, and fit down in the
kingdom of Heaven, while we ourfelves
are caft out. And let the confideration of
this prevail on us, while we have time fo

SERM. to do, not only to cease from works of
XIII.  darkness, but to walk as children of light,
that causing men, by our good works, to
glorify our Father which is in Heaven, we
may hereafter be admitted into that heavenly
city, which “ the glory of God doth
lighten, and the Lamb is the light thereof—
where His servants shall reign for ever and
ever !”

SERMON XIV.

ON MEEKNESS.


ST. MATT. v. 5.

*Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit
the earth.*

BEHOLD the appointed heirs of that SERM.
inheritance, for different portions of XIV.
which, oceans of human blood have been
shed ! Behold the end of those scenes of
carnage which have been exhibited on the
earth ! How have statesmen toiled, how
have heroes fought, to gain the kingdom of
men ; how hath military prowess been en-
couraged, how have maxims of policy been
studied ! yet behold the Most High, who
doeth according to His will in the army of
Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the
earth,


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SERM. earth, reserving the inheritance of it, not

XIV.  for the fearless, not for the ambitious, not for those who grasp at the possession of others, or for those who stand foremost in the chronicles of the world for the qualities they chiefly celebrate, but for those who are practised in a virtue to many unknown, by some despised: “Blessed are *the meek*; for they shall inherit the earth.” Go to now, ye great men, might we say; weep and howl, ye conquerours, for your politics are come to nought, your laurels are faded, your triumphs are vanished: God will number your conquests, and finish them; ye are weighed in the balances, and found wanting; what ye have laboured after is divided among others, and a generation, whom ye contemned, are preferred before you. “What then, ye would here, perhaps, ask, Are we to receive this declaration literally? Shall the time ever be seen on this globe when the meek shall flourish? Most assuredly; for so it is written in the Scripture of truth. In that day, when all other kingdoms shall be swallowed up by
that

that kingdom of righteousness which the SERM.
Lord will establish, then “ with righte- XIV.
ousness shall He judge the poor, and re-
prove with equity for the meek of the
earth ;” then “ will He beautify the meek
with salvation, and they shall delight them-
selves in the abundance of peace.” But
who shall live when God doeth this we
know not : yet we are certain, that on the
new earth which shall be revealed after all
the counsels of its great Creatour are ac-
complished on the present, all those whose
meekness hath preserved them in the fear
and obedience to God, shall receive an in-
heritance which shall never be taken from
them. That our lot may at the end of the
days be in this everlasting kingdom, let us
investigate the nature of the virtue for which
so great and precious a reward is thus pro-
mised ; each of us, as we proceed, com-
paring his own past behaviour with what
we shall, by this mean, discover, it ought
to have been, whence, those who have in
this point acted right, shall have rejoicing
in themselves, and those who have been

SERM. wrong, may learn to correct their error,

XIV.  A meek disposition hath two characteristics, forbearance and concession, the exercise of both of which is peculiarly adapted to the nature and state, and requisite for the peace of man. By the first, I mean, an unwillingness to be provoked at the affronts or injuries, which proceed from the ignorance, thoughtlessness, errors, or even the malice of others, and an inclination to overlook and bury them in oblivion, rather than to resent or take vengeance for them. At the recommendation of such a temper, that evil pride which so often takes possession of the human heart, may, indeed, revolt, and the haughty creature, man, proud of his own nothingness, would, perhaps, insist that he must always act with becoming spirit: and here, however, unexpectedly, I would readily join with those who have such imaginations, and acknowledge, that it is with the spirit which their powers warrant, which their situation calls for, that I would exhort them to behave, adding only a caution to estimate their situation and their powers

powers rightly ; for if this be justly done, SERM.
the loftiest countenance will fall, and many XIV.
things which before might have gone under
the hard name of disgraceful submissions,
be admitted as fitting, and the seemly dic-
tates of truth and reason. Let us, there-
fore, first consider, how many of those
things which are construed as affronts, and
made the causes of quarrel and lasting dis-
sentiment, may, in reality, at first, arise from
the ignorance of those who offend thereby.
What we may hold to be matter of im-
portance, others may think trifling ; what
we may feel ourselves highly interested in,
others may suppose concerns us not : and
how different will the nature of their actions
appear if they be considered as done under
the circumstance of their ignorance, from
what it will if they be viewed as performed
with the same degree of information which
ourselves have ! Weigh well, I beseech
you, this case, and ye will see the necessity
of forbearance for the prevention of many
evils, and the avoidance of much guilt.
What proportion, think ye, of the animos-
ities,

SERM. fities, which, to the disgrace of Christians,
XIV. now subsist among them, have arisen merely
from the parties not having, at first, had
temper fairly to enquire into the motives of
each other's conduct? Were these explained,
it might be found, that where a premeditated injury is supposed, even no danger of
damage was foreseen; or where a studied
neglect has been presumed; the concern
and interest of the party offended lay entirely
unknown. Would men recollect these
things, and enter on the examination of the
differences in which they are engaged, suggested
thereby, many who are now unjustly
esteemed enemies, and pursued with invective,
would appear innocent of what is laid
to their charge, and a stop be put to the
continuation of both the injury done to them
and of their accuser's guilt, in being causelessly
adverse unto them. Concern and attention
to the ease and interests of others being
our duty, let its proper share of criminality
be charged on inadvertency in these points;
but let us be careful of confounding ignorance
therewith; and let

us remember, too, that we ourselves are SERM.
by no mean secure from the offences we are XIV.
ready to condemn. I think I might venture
to presume, that there is scarcely a man
present who has not, at one time or other,
met with the disagreeable circumstance of
having his actions misinterpreted, or his
intentions misconstrued; and should not
our experience of the ease with which others
mistake, or are misled in these respects, in
all reason, teach us to mistrust our own con-
structions of the purposes and behaviour of
others? And the absolute faults which we
are conscious ourselves of committing, and
the just cause of offence, which, through
hastiness and inattention, we sometimes give
to others, should not the knowledge of these
induce us to exercise that forbearance of
which we ourselves do often stand in need;
if we shew it not, Can we expect that it
should be shewed unto us? And if neither
we nor others shew it, What will be the
end thereof? Were every man to revenge
all the real or imaginary wrongs he receives,
as the retaliation would scarcely ever be

SERM. kept within its just bounds, vengeance
XIV. would beget vengeance, till each heart being
set on bloody courses, mutual slaughter
would ensue, and the rude scene end only
in one general destruction. Meekness, then,
as far as it consisteth in forbearance, well
becometh our situation in society, wherein
we are connected with those who, from
their various degrees of ignorance, are per-
petually liable unwillingly to offend; the
measure too, in which our own weakness
and criminality cause us to need it, affords
a powerful reason for our exercise of it;
while a general neglect of it, (and if one
may justly discard this virtue, another may)
would introduce general confusion, and open
the way to carnage and desolation. And if
to these considerations, we add, that there
is a generation who sleep not, unless they
have done mischief, whose employment is
talebearing, whose delight is by misrep-
resentation and falsehood, to encrease dissen-
sion, and foment quarrels, the necessity of
being slow to anger, backward to resent, if
we would avoid causeless and ceaseless ani-
mosities,

mosities, and the danger of venting our indignation on those who deserve it not, will be sufficiently apparent to have, I hope, its due effect on your minds. The second characteristic of those whom our Lord hath, in the text, pronounced “blessèd,” is concession; by which I do not mean the receding from the practice of our duty, or the confession or support of truth, for this may not be done; no, not for a moment: but the parting with what, of strict right, belongs to ourselves, rather than enter into contention for it, and the compliance with requests earnestly urged, though it may be irksome unto us: nor mean I to recommend these things unlimitedly, for the unreasonableness of the bad would then soon despoil the good of every thing, to support themselves in their vices. But many are the things which are not worth tenaciously retaining, their value being not to be compared with that of peace and good neighbourhood: oftentimes may it happen, that the possession of something we have, would afford much greater satisfaction to another than


SERM.

XIV.

SERM. than it can to ourselves ; a retreat, too, is
 XIV. sometimes the surest road to victory ; and he
 who conquers with the least bloodshed will
 ever be the best commander. Our Lord's
 lesson, that we resist not evil, but if a man
 will sue you at the law for thy coat, let him
 have thy cloak also, plainly instructs us
 patiently to suffer some wrongs rather than
 enter into hostilities even of a legal kind.
 Great are the evils which many Christians
 would have avoided, had they obeyed this
 precept of their divine Master ; and there
 is one in particular which merits attention,
 that a man seldom comes out of a dispute
 so innocent as he went into it ; circum-
 stances naturally occur in the course of it,
 which tend to embitter the mind, and give
 rise to the evil passions of anger and malice,
 and those incite men to actions of the vilest
 kind. Ought not, then, that object to be
 great, which induces a man to run the
 risque of being tempted to the commission
 of great crimes ? Or if Christians, through
 their meekness, avoid the guilt of such,
 Can we think innocence is preserved at too
 dear

dear a rate? I doubt not but that most of SERM.
you have been witnesses to contests pro- XIV.
longed, and animosities carried to a great
height, in cases where a little concession on
either side would have produced harmony,
and strongly cemented a friendship, which,
for want of that, was broken off, perhaps,
never to be renewed; and when men thus
bitterly contend for other things, to the
destruction of mutual regard and charity,
and the forfeiture of all the good that flows
therefrom, May we not justly say, that
they lose the substance by catching at a
shadow? If, by persevering in contention,
ye gain a victory, the joy thence resulting,
far from tending to meliorate your hearts,
will be selfish, and more likely to engender
insolence and a narrow pride, than to give
rise to any virtue; but if, by concession,
ye gratify another, the pleasure ye will
thence derive will contribute to enlarge your
minds, and the principle of meekness being
thus strengthened in your breasts, ye will
not only become more ready to yield happi-
ness to others, but be better armed against
any

SERM. any who may have power to trespass on
XIV. you, since the ability they possess of hurt-
ing you will be lessened by all the ease with
which ye can recede from your rights;
and thus were ye even subject to the most
absolute tyranny, your readiness at conces-
sion would place your happiness beyond its
reach, and the utmost force of human power
would be in vain exerted against those who
were thus encompassed with heavenly ar-
mour. And should such conduct (as it
will where the minds of your adversaries
are not very depraved) soften their hearts,
and convince them that it is against the
cause of virtue they are fighting; ye at
once become conquerors, and bringing to
their senses those who have erred, and
saving, it may be, a soul from destruction,
ye gain a glory more brilliant, more lasting,
than ye could have reaped from the boldest
and most successful opposition. Let the
heroes of the world glory in the strength
of their arms; leave them to recount the
battles they have fought, the armies they
have overthrown, the numbers they have
forced

forced to sue for their lives ; the multitude SERM.
of the unoffending which they have pil- XIV.
laged, the numbers of the innocent which 
they have caused to be butchered, shall blast
all their fame, and turn their boasting into
confusion. Leave the duellist to tell how
oft he hath revenged his honour, and how
cautious all are of affronting him ; and that
neither the ties of friendship, the laws of
his country, nor the divine prerogative,
“ Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith
the Lord,” hath restrained him from seeking
the blood of those who have dared to offend
him. Let the litigious man report the suits
in which he hath been engaged, the families
he hath distressed, and all the evils suffered
by those he hath delivered to the judge !
These goodly triumphs become not the sol-
dier of Christ ; the warfare in which he
is engaged requires other means of con-
quest ; peaceable, forgiving, and compas-
sionate, he seeks not the destruction, but
the amendment and recovery of his ene-
mies, thereto instructed by the perfect
example of His blessed Master, Who, though
He

SERM. He could have commanded all the armies of

XIV. Heaven to assist Him, and have crushed

His persecutors at a word, on the contrary pitied them in their guilt, and prayed for their pardon. Come, then, “to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls, Who hath left us an example that ye should follow His steps; Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him Who judgeth righteously. Learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart, so shall ye find rest to your souls.” That these qualities have a natural tendency to contribute to the happiness of all with whom those who have gained them are connected, is sufficiently manifest, and that they will assuredly promote that of the persons in whom they are found, we know, because to such is promised the blessing of God. Indeed, the last of these points seems to be but a consequence of the other, since, if the meek be fit instruments to make each other happy, no wonder that God should choose them as such, or that He should regard, with a favour-

favourable eye, those who, like Him, de- SERM.
light in the exercise of mercy and for- XIV.
bearance. And though through these, the

Lord hath hitherto withholden his arm from the destroying the wicked from the earth, too small must we deem the share which the righteous have in His providence, if we do not believe that He will, at last, arise, and deliver them from the wicked; and redeem them from the fury of the oppressour; or that judgement will not be established on the earth, and the salvation of God come forth before all nations; or that though He hath permitted vice and its adherents to triumph for a time in this part of His creation, He will not at length vindicate His dominion, and take unto Himself His great power, and reign. What happiness the meek will experience when their almighty Protector and Patron shall thus visibly interpose, to give them an everlasting inheritance, where they shall no more be exposed to severe tryals of their virtues, but employed only in the grateful exercise of them, where the righteousness after

SERM. which they hungred and thirsted shall
XIV. flourish, and where the peace in which they
delight shall abound, where all they meet
shall be as benevolently inclined to them as
they to all they meet, and where endless
ages shall proceed in the mutual exchange
of that which shall never fail, charity, and
the all-glorious presence of God shall ever
give fulness of joy, far exceeds all descrip-
tion, and can be but in a very small portion
of it conceived, that ineffable tranquillity
which is derived from the sincere practice
of this virtue, may to the meek themselves
afford some foretaste of what is reserved for
them, but far removed must any portion of
it be from the conception of others; still
ye have but to become meek, and then ye
shall not partly only, but altogether receive
these blessings: for the Lord will teach you
His ways; He will increase your joy, and
beautify you with salvation; and ye shall
be called the blessed of the Lord!

SERMON XV.

ON THE DUTY OF MERCY.

ST. MATT. v. 7.

*Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain
mercy.*

THE evil service into which the doctrine, that charity will cover a multitude of sins, hath been prest, to the creation of hopes, that a crowd of vices against which the wrath of God is denounced throughout the Gospel, shall escape the punishment due unto them, because they are found in company with one virtue, renders it necessary to caution Christians against permitting the promise of the text, that “the merciful shall obtain mercy,” to encourage them to neglect the other parts of

SERM.
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their

SERM. their duty, under the conceit that the performance of this will atone for the omission of the rest, and to remind them of those other words of our Lord—"When ye shall have done *all* those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." God knows that the most vigilant and careful of us stand in need of pardon for offences enow, and have little cause to add to the number of our sins, that there may be matter for Him to exercise that mercy on, which we have shewn to others. Consider but the numerous offences into which the best men fall, accompanied only with the aggravations which, in truth, attend them, and ye will see that if these alone be remitted, great will be the mercy obtained; and if they be retained, as on every one who is not his self merciful they shall, their weight will be sufficient to keep the soul loaded with them from ever rising out of the depths of misery.

But

But while we thus endeavour to prevent SERM.
an ill use being made of the passage before XV.
us, by its receiving an interpretation more
suited to the desires of men than to the
truth and purity of religion, we must strive
rightly to divide the word of truth, and not
weaken that encouragement to penitents
which it contains, or obscure the instruction
which, in common with other passages of
Holy Scripture, it gives to those who, re-
penting of their crimes, wish to obtain the
divine forgiveness, to go and show compas-
sion toward their fellow-servants: for that
this shall have great effect in forwarding
their own pardon, our blessed Saviour hath
also instructed us by saying, for “ If ye
forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly
Father will also forgive you.” Since, then,
our being merciful is made the condition of
our receiving mercy, and on that receipt
only our hopes are founded, let us consider
in what the exercise of this virtue consists,
and what practice may entitle a man to the
denomination of merciful.

SERM. The subject of mercy is distress, and the
XV. end of it either to prevent or to relieve the
sufferings of others: hence the modes in
which it may be exerted are as various as
the methods in which relief may be administered; and by forgiveness, by intercession, by assistance, may we prove ourselves merciful; the frequent opportunities of doing which may, and will, if they be all neglected, render us inexcusable: the rich and the powerful are those to whom discourses on the amiableness and excellence of this quality are most commonly addressed; but though when dwelling in the breasts of such it becomes the source of more extensive good, it is not without its beneficial effects in the poorest and the weakest; and the praise of it is not derived from the greatness of the means which men have to manifest it, but from the sincerity of their inclination to make use of whatever means they have. It is not from sudden fits of good-nature, occasioned by the impression which particular circumstances may make on a man's mind; it is not from one or two detached

detached acts of generosity, that a man can SERM.
justly be called merciful, but from a con- XV.
stant temper and disposition of heart, to
alleviate the evils under which he sees others
labouring: it is in the practice of this at-
tribute of God that we are peculiarly admo-
nished to look to the divine pattern, which
is in the course of His providence set be-
fore us, and in whatever way the exercise
of it be required, we may therein behold
the plainest, the most persuasive, and in-
citing lessons for our conduct.


Has any one, by trespassing against you,
incurred your resentment, and is it in your
power to make him feel the weight of your
indignation, withhold your uplifted arm, and
ere you reject his petition for forgiveness,
reflect how readily God receives the sinner's
supplication for pardon; and if His ven-
geance were not thereby stayed, What must
be your own fate! But the injuries you
have received are, perhaps, aggravated by
peculiar circumstances; they were utterly
unprovoked, and you have been a friend to

SERM. the man who offered them; these are points
XV. which certainly encrease his guilt, and you
may justly complain of the ingratitude you
experience: but recollect, at the same time,
what you have ever received from Heaven
but benefits, and whether the obligations
conferred on you have produced that grate-
ful return of love, obedience, and affiance,
which they ought to have secured: go to
your own heart; Ask that whether you
have not added sin to sin; whether the
judgements which you have at times dreaded
being averted, has had its due effect on you,
or whether being released from the terror
of an evil menaced for your correction, and
withholden on your contrition, you have
not renewed your offences, and augmented
both the number and the greatness of your
provocations? Estimate the disproportion
there is between the guilt contracted by
sinning against God, and that of sinning
against man; and as you would avoid the
being called to account for a debt of ten
thousand talents, forbear to rigorously exact
one of an hundred pence. Let the pleas
which

which you urge in your own favour, when SERM.
applying to Heaven for pardon, not be XV.
overlooked when others ask you for forgive-
ness, the ignorance, the weakness you have
pleaded, belong also to them; neither
should the patience for which you have
petitioned for yourself, be denied to them.
Ever restrain yourself from executing the
first dictates of resentment. Was the divine
wrath to burst forth on every offence which
merits it, all flesh would soon fail before
it. Look to the long-suffering, and the
goodness of God: observe how He bears
with the rebellious, and how soon shows
His mercy on those who turn unto Him;
and learn of His apostle to be angry and
sin not, to let not the sun go down on your
wrath!

Among those particulars in which the
Lord did, by the prophet Isaiah, exhort his
people of Israel to cease to do evil, and
learn to do well, is that of pleading for the
widow: whereby is suggested to us the duty
of exercising another branch of mercy, that
of

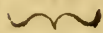
SERM. of intercession; by the use of which we

XV.  enlarge our sphere of doing good, and, in another point, imitate the divine example set before us. It is by no mean an uncommon case for the cries of the distressed not to reach the ears of those who have the power of affording them relief; the appearance of poverty and wretchedness is permitted to preclude all access to the presence of the rich and the great; and the petitions of those who labour under them must generally go through the hands of mercenaries, who are little inclined to the causes of such as are not able to reward them. Nor is this evil confined to applications made to persons in the higher ranks of society: there are who for that employment which furnishes them with their daily bread, or for portions of a benevolence which preserves them from misery, or for other comforts of which it is hard to be deprived, depend on men not many degrees above them, but who are undeservedly neglected, have their wants overlooked, and are left to pine away in penury, because none will intercede for them. A
mis-

misrepresentation, perhaps, of their behaviour, given by an interested person, has estranged one, who was formerly their patron, from them; or their own unadvised conduct may have caused what was the effect of ignorance or folly, to be esteemed the fruit of insolence or dishonesty. Now in every such instance, will not the dictate of mercy be, take up the cause of the friendless, and plead for him that hath no helper; bring the case of the afflicted to those who can deliver them, and put a stop to the oppressions of the petty tyrant. If you want incitement to obey this dictate, look to the bright pattern given you in the case of all mankind, when the sin of man had separated between his God and Him, and He lay under the power of satan; when there was no one to help, none to uphold, the Son of God became our intercessour; and by His all-prevailing mediation, gained us pardon and reconciliation with His Father. Here was pity shewn even to offenders; here was intercession made for those who were yet sinners, by One too who is infinitely

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SERM. infinitely above them. Follow, then, only
 XV. at an immense distance, the example herein
 given you ; copy, in the faintest traces, the
 mercy thus exhibited ; and by interposing,
 where *your* interposition can succour, strive
 to secure to yourself the protection of that
 arm, which alone is able to bring perfect
 salvation.

The third grand particular in which
 mercy manifests itself, is that of yielding
 assistance to those who need it ; whether
 supplying their necessities by alms, or re-
 lieving their wants by any other mode. To
 one who speaks on this point, the direction
 given by our Saviour to His apostles in ano-
 ther matter, may well serve as a topic ;
 “ Freely ye have received,” said our blessed
 Lord, “ freely give !” If we rightly con-
 ceived of our situation, we should esteem
 ourselves, in all we possess, as the stewards
 of Heaven, to whom various goods have
 been entrusted, various powers delegated,
 that by dealing out the former, and exerting
 the latter, in favour of such as stand in
 need

need of either, we may supply the indigence of the one, and remedy the weakness of the other. And how can we so certainly secure to ourselves a constant and plentiful supply of each, as by employing them in a manner which thus tends to the glory of the Giver, and to the happiness of His creatures. It is then that any being appears in the most glorious light, in the most eligible station, when he is employed as the willing and honoured instrument of the bounty and mercies of Him who is the Head of all beings. As the vessels in which men prepare poisons (though the poisons themselves, perhaps, are, in the end, intended for a medicinal purpose) are, when the disgusting process is perfect, destroyed; so is it with those vessels of wrath whom God useth for the accomplishment of His judgements, and whom having endured with much long-suffering, He at length consigneth to destruction: but as we deal with those instruments by which we obtain what is wholesome and precious, preserving them with care, striving to make them ever more compleat

SERM.
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SERM. compleat for our purpose ; so with those
XV.  men who being desirous of becoming in the hands of their Creatour, vessels unto honour, prepare themselves unto every good work the divine goodness itself co-operates ; supplyeth funds for their beneficence, and promotes their progression to glory. Those who, with a niggardly hand, deal out their alms, and when they give, do it grudgingly, and as of necessity, who when parting with a trifle, are anxiously thinking how they shall replace it, fearful lest their charity should bring them to distress, are equally deficient in generosity towards men, and in truth and gratitude towards God : they may be a provident, they may be a careful, but they are neither a merciful nor a faithful generation.

But it is not always by bestowing on them part of our possessions that we can assist others, health and strength afford means of alleviating the evils under which the sick and the infirm labour : by condolence and conversation may those who are oppressed with

with sorrow be comforted, the disheartened SERM.
may be encouraged, and, by numberless XV.
offices of friendship, may various distresses
with which life abounds, have their poignancy abated. Neither is there any of these good works in which the poor cannot bear a part, they are liable to injuries, and have often occasions of quarrel; opportunities, then, of exercising forgiveness, they cannot want; there are others level with them to whom their mediation may be of use, in which case their readiness at intercession may be manifested; and as long as health and strength remain even from the duty of almsgiving, they are not exempt; since the apostle teaches them to labour with their hands at the things which are good, that they may have to give to him that needeth; and for all the other modes in which mercy may be exerted, their families, their relations, their connexions, will supply continual calls on them therein to practice this virtue: so extensive is the ground of claim to it, so ample is the field in which it may be exercised, that occasions on which it may
be

SERM. be shewn will seldom fail to present themselves; for objects of distress are scarcely ever wanting; and as the merely being such constitutes the plea for mercy, other accidental circumstances of their being of our country, our own sect, or even of their being clear of all offence towards us, cannot be requisite to entitle them to it. The Gospel does not teach us to consider, ere we assist one in affliction, whether he be our neighbour or not; but commands us to go, and prove ourselves neighbours to all that are so. The conduct of the Samaritans was presumptuously contradictory to the law, indeed, given from Heaven; they worshipped they knew not what, and salvation was of the Jews; but the former were not, therefore, to be denied the common offices of humanity; nor would any one of the latter have been to be justified, had they, when seeing even a Samaritan wounded, and half dead, pass by on the other side. Far, far from the spirit of christianity, is that wretched narrowness of heart, which closes the ears of some against the cries of all who
are

are not connected with them, and which SERM.
changes what ought to be one of the most XV.
powerful motives to compassion, the cir-
cumstance of being a stranger, into ground
of disregard. The creation is the unbounded
theatre on which the divine goodness is dis-
played, the just and unjust taste of it: the
sun shineth, the rain droppeth from Heaven
on both; “ Be ye merciful, therefore, as
your Father which is in Heaven is merci-
ful!” If ye do good to those only who do
good to you, wherein do ye excel even those
who are proverbially bad? But “ love
your enemies, bless them that curse you, do
good to them that hate you, that ye may
be the children of the Highest: for He is
kind both to the unthankful and to the evil.”
“ Are not,” said our blessed Saviour, “ five
sparrows sold for two farthings? and not
one of them is forgotten before God.” His
benevolence extendeth to all: Where, then,
should our mercy stop? There are who
seem to think, that the brute creation are
entitled to none, and that being given into
the hand of man, they cannot be treated too
harshly:

SERM. harshly: but let the swollen pride of man re-

XV. collect, that the meanest of the brutes, nay, the lowest of the inanimate creation, stand in the relation of fellow-creatures unto him; and though he be, by their common Creator, placed in an higher rank, be endowed with greater powers, and hath a larger extent of dominion given unto him, let him not think the unnecessary sufferings he inflicts on those over which he hath authority, are forgotten before God. It is written, “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” A passage that would almost induce one to think, that the inhabitants of Judah were, in the days of Solomon, first as barbarous in ill using animals, and then as ingenious in tormenting them under pretence of medicinal applications, as they are now in our own country. The extreme inhumanity here commonly shown, in overworking, beating, and starving creatures, the most useful and most faithful to us, is a disgrace not only to our profession as Christians, but to our species as men; and as
the

the absolute power we possess over the inferior animals, does more nearly than any other we have, resemble that which God hath over us, if in the use of it we neglect to be merciful, How shall we who offend so much more heinously than we can be offended, hope to obtain mercy? Or if we protract our own cruelty, by bringing up our children in the practice of the like, permitting them to torment domestick animals and insects for their amusement, and exercise their ingenuity in eradicating from their bosoms that tenderness of heart, without which they will become an hateful generation, that please not God, and are contrary to men, How can we look up to the common Father of all for forbearance, where we have merited punishment? Let, then, the sentence of the text be fixed in your minds; restrain not the mercy enjoined in it within the narrow limits which animosity, selfishness, prejudice, or ignorance, would prescribe: the command given you is explicit, the example which ye are


2 2

bidden

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SERM. bidden to follow, sufficiently visible; ye

XV.  have only then to remember, that the former cannot be disobeyed, nor the latter overlooked, but at your own peril.

SERMON XVI.

ON ANGER AND ITS EFFECTS.

EPHES. IV. 26, 27.

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath: neither give place to the devil.

ONE consequence of the ancient world SERM.
being left so long to its own teachers, XVI.
was, that human wisdom had sufficient time
to try how far it could advance by its own
strength in defining the duties of men, and
by that mean ascertaining the road to per-
fection and happiness. What the event of
this trial was, the multitude of sects which
arose, each charging the others with having
mistaken the way, and the remarkable cir-

SERM. cumstance that after all, many found every
 XVI. one so defective, that they endeavoured to
 form a new system, by selecting something
 from each, completely manifest. The
 preaching of the Gospel yielded a remedy
 for all these deficiencies ; and the lessons of
 that stand clear of the charges of either
 leaving men in doubt as to the consequences
 of their conduct, of giving them licence to
 indulge their passions, or of requiring a
 total and unattainable freedom from the
 affections incident to our nature : but rightly
 dividing the word of truth, command us,
 as in the text, so to govern our feelings,
 that they may not transport us beyond the
 bounds of reason and of justice : “ Be ye
 angry, and sin not.”

Our blessed Lord hath apprized us, that
 the perfect work of this passion is the sub-
 ject of the sixth commandment ; and that
 when anger hath conceived, it bringeth
 forth hatred, and that when hatred is com-
 plete, it bringeth forth murder : and, in-
 deed, this tendency of it may be deduced
 from

from the words of those who are under the dominion of it, whom we often hear making declarations like these, concerning the object of their resentment, “ I could kill him ! I wish he were dead ! ” or uttering curses whose effects would extend even beyond the grave.

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To preserve us from becoming slaves to a passion so pernicious in its progress, and which holds a dominion so uncontrollable over those who once submit to its power, let us now consider the particulars in which it manifests itself, and their effects ; that we may both be aware of the steps by which it acquires its power, and earnest to prevent consequences so replete with mischief and disgrace.

That involuntary indignation which we feel at an unworthy action, as long as it exceeds not its province of keeping us alive to a sense of injury, and making us eager to take the part of the oppressed, is the offspring of natural justice, the dignified



SERM. presentment of the claims of equity and  
XVI. truth : but when, instead of being confined  
to fair expostulation, and calm endeavours  
to execute judgement, it bursts forth into  
the bitterness of invective, or the violence  
of assault, it places us at once in the situation  
of offenders ; and we become exposed to the  
censures of unrighteousness we would have  
passed on others. The ancient sage who  
would not chastise his servant because he  
felt himself under the impulse of passion,  
did not consult only the safety of his slave,  
but considered his own character, and the  
future feelings of his own mind. Would  
some Christians do the same, they would  
not disgrace themselves, nor transgress the  
precepts of their divine Master, by per-  
mitting circumstances of even trifling mo-  
ment to deprive them of all patience, and  
inflame their anger to such a degree, that  
one unaccustomed to witness such gusts of  
passion, would imagine, they had received  
some irreparable and inestimable injury ;  
when the whole harm done exceeds not that  
of

of a book mislaid, a dish ill drest, or a SERM.  
broken glass.

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Now the mischievous consequences of such absurdities are not confined to the contempt raised in the breasts of those in whose sight they are committed, and who, however uninstructed they may be, can yet discern the unreasonableness of such conduct, nor to the dislike excited by the harsh rebukes and violent treatment they suffer by it: but they extend to loading with guilt the persons who allow themselves to become thus the slaves of passion. For shall those who are charged not even to return railing for railing be guiltless, when, with little or no provocation, they pour forth the most unjust invectives on those who have, perhaps, unwittingly offended them? or those who are commanded to bless even their enemies, remain innocent, when they heap curses on those who are entitled to their protection, or have the best-founded claim to their love? A man under the impulse of passion can, where a fault has been committed,

SERM. mitted, hardly restrain his censure within  
 XVI. the bounds of just retribution; but the multitude of injuries which are committed by going beyond this, are not to be numbered, and hardly to be conceived; men are falsely accused, unjustly punished; dumb animals are beaten, and Heaven itself insulted; and these things are perpetrated without the fury of the guilty raging beyond their own houses; when only, as the wise man expresses it, they are as lions among their servants.

In cases where the indulgence of anger is not thus restrained, (and it generally, perhaps, is so from craft more than from virtue) its further course seems to be determined by the degree of animal courage with which those subject to it are endowed. In men of bold spirit, it disturbs society by violent quarrels and furious disputes; by dissensions which, among the lower ranks, often end in blows and bloody strife; and among those who think themselves men of better breeding, in the impious and murderous

derous act of duelling. Of the inconsistency SERM.  
of this nefarious practice, (permitted by XVI.  
the sovereigns of Europe to the bringing  
down on themselves and their kingdoms the  
divine judgements for blood guiltiness) of  
its inconsistency, I say, with the Gospel  
precepts of meekness, I have before taken  
notice of; here it demands it more especially  
as a direct breach of the precept of the  
text, “ Let not the sun go down on your  
wrath.” For what can be more contrary  
to this than for a man to foster in his breast  
the intention of meeting his brother in  
mortal combat? coolly to put in order the  
instruments of destruction, and seek out  
another to be spectator of his murderous  
attempt?

Endeavours I know have been made to  
excuse, if not to justify, this most un-  
christian practice; and the words of the  
Gospel have been wiredrawn to make them  
speak a language less repugnant to it than  
they really do. But what if it do keep  
some insolent spirits in order, Is the pro-  
duction

SEEM. duction of this benefit, (though the practice were unaccompanied by any evil to counteract this partial good) an object to be sought at the expence of the divine favour? Or, Are the comforts of unanimity and peace to be obtained by any other mean so certainly, as by the blessing of that God who can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men? On the other hand, How many inoffensive and conscientious men have, through the permission of these attempts at murder, been insulted by wretches, who finding themselves possessed of mechanical courage enough to appear in the field of combat, and void of all fear of God to restrain them, have taken advantage of these things to affront and persecute the peaceable? How much human blood has been spilled, how many cut off in the prime of their lives, who might otherwise have lived to be of essential service to their country, how many widows and orphans been made by it? And are these no evils? or are they such as will not counterbalance the benefit which is rather imagined than proved  
to



to flow from the unwarrantable countenance **SERM.**  
given to this sanguinary practice? **XVI.**



Imagined, I say, for how did society subsist in all the ancient world without it? How does it in three-fourths of the modern? and particularly in the most populous empire on earth, consisting of the most ceremonious people, who by no mean find it necessary to support their ceremonial, strict as it is, by the point of the sword, and the adoption of this offspring of barbarous superstition? Or does the example of that people among whom it is most prevalent, plead for its being retained? How far are their manners softened particularly by this? Are they less sudden or quick in quarrel than others, or more cautious of giving offence? Hath not, on the contrary, custom so hardened their hearts, that they seek a brother's blood with less remorse than they would put a favourite dog to death; and proceed to attempt his murder with the same gaiety of heart with which they would go to a place of amusement? In this case  
facts

SERM. facts themselves shew the futility of the  
 XVI. plea, and demonstrate that the permission of  
 appeals to the sword is not an adequate remedy for the impertinence of the thoughtless, or the rudeness of the insolent.

And for the attempts made to reconcile the precepts of the meek and holy Jesus to such a practice; this is so unpromising a task, that scarcely any man would venture to pursue it, were he not encouraged in it by the comments of men, who in their attempts to explain, do, in fact, modify the precepts of our Lord; and of whom, (commentators I mean in general) though some do, for their learned and pious labours, merit the sincerest thanks of the church, of others of them the same may be justly said which a celebrated Roman writer has asserted of the philosophers; that there is nothing so absurd but some or other of them have maintained. The words of our blessed Saviour are best interpreted by his apostles, to whom He gave the Holy Spirit, not only to bring to their remembrance whatsoever He

He

He had said unto them, but to lead them SERM.  
into the true meaning of it. How then are XVI.  
His precepts of forbearance and forgiveness  
explained by them? Are they limited by  
the customs of the world? or restrained by  
the fear of encouraging aggression? So far  
from it, that His example is urged in eluci-  
dation of His words: and we are told by  
St. Peter, that “ Even hereunto were we  
called—that we should follow His steps:  
Who, when He was reviled, reviled not  
again: when He suffered, He threatened  
not: but committed Himself to Him Who  
judgeth righteously.” Go now, ye who  
think that nothing but the blood of the  
offender can wash out the disgrace of re-  
ceiving a coarse contradiction, and reconcile  
your maxims with the example of your  
divine Master, who endured such contra-  
diction of sinners against Himself! Recon-  
cile them, if ye can, with this lesson of  
His apostle: “ Put on, therefore, as the  
elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of  
mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind,  
meekness, long suffering, forbearing one  
another,

SERM. another, and forgiving one another, if any


XVI. man have a quarrel against any : even as

Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Make your demand of vengeance consistent with the following admonition of the same inspired teacher : " Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath : for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord." Make it consistent with the blessed Jesus' words to Peter, when he appealed to the sword in defence of his Master, and even through a mistake of His directions, " Put up again thy sword into its place : for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." And recollect, that after all your efforts to evade the commandments of your Saviour, and hide from yourselves the difference, which, in truth, exists between His directions and your conduct, the cause must be again argued before the throne of Him whose prerogative ye have invaded, and the validity of your worldly pleas be determined by the perfect wisdom, and justice of Him, from whose sentence there can be no appeal !

But

But while the excess of anger does, in SERM.  
men of bold spirit, thus lead to open vio- XVI.  
lence and daring murders, it operates in a  
no less pernicious way in those who, not  
having courage to take an immediate re-  
venge on any who have incurred their re-  
sentment, watch, with malicious craft and  
opportunity, to gratify their desire of ven-  
geance. The disssembled hatred of these  
characters is more cruel, because more deli-  
berate than the fierce animosity of the others;  
and their obduracy against all the interme-  
diate circumstances which arise to awaken  
their remorse, is a sad symptom of hearts  
in great measure deserted by the divine  
Spirit of grace. The slightest effects of  
wrath which has taken this course, appear  
in spiteful tricks and unlooked-for evil  
turns; when the enraged party often boasts  
of his malicious memory, and tells his ad-  
versary, "I fancy you thought I had forgot  
your behaviour to me; but you see now I  
can remember!" But still more hateful are  
its fruits, when the vengeance is directed  
against the peace or the property of men;





SERM. when endeavours are privately made to alarm  
XVI.  their fears, and schemes pursued to injure  
their reputation : when, through the malice  
of an enraged servant, a valuable piece of  
furniture is destroyed, or an useful animal  
spoiled. This avenging on poor brutes the  
imaginary or real injuries received from  
their owners, is a practice particularly dia-  
bolical, and carried to a most destructive  
height in that neighbouring island, where,  
under the nurture of papal superstition, al-  
most every enormity attains to its fullest  
growth. Among ourselves it but too often  
makes its appearance together with other  
modes of satiating a rancorous thirst for  
low revenge ; all of which are so truly the  
works of the devil, as to leave but little  
hope, that those who are guilty of them,  
will not be carried captive by him at his  
will ; and considered as the fruits of anger,  
they leave us no longer at a loss for the  
reason of our Lord's uttering menaces so  
severe against various degrees of a passion,  
of which the progress is marked with crimes  
so heinous.

In

In the text itself, indeed, the permitting SERM.  
ourselves to be any time under the influence XVI.  
of anger, is considered as affording occasion  
to the great adversary of our salvation,  
“ Let not the sun go down on your wrath :  
neither give place to the devil.” And the  
depth of guilt into which some are plunged,  
the atrocities which were at first not only  
unintended, but even not apprehended by  
themselves, into which they are at length  
precipitated, while under the influence of  
this passion, indicate strongly the impulse  
of him who was a murderer from the be-  
ginning. The criminality of murder it-  
self, may, indeed, be heightened by circum-  
stances either of cruelty or treachery, yet  
being the last act of hatred of which its  
object is sensible, and that which puts it  
for ever out of the power of the perpetrator  
to render due recompence to the person he  
has injured, it forms the full close to the  
progress of anger, the dreadful end toward  
which every one is advancing while he fol-  
lows the dictates of his wrath.

SERM. But this subject is not to be dismissed  
 XVI. without noticing another species of murder, which, although frequently the effect of the madness of fear, is sometimes produced by the furiousness of anger; when a man suffering his mind to become irritated by adverse circumstances, lays violent hands on himself. This unnatural deed is plainly forbidden by the general law, "Thou shalt do *no* murder:" still the contradictory perverseness of men of reprobate minds has discovered pleas by which others of shallow thought, and little information, are at times almost persuaded, that in some cases it might be justified. To give a short but decisive answer to all these, let it be remembered, that those wise men of antiquity who admitted, that there might be circumstances under which it was right, still limited them to a situation that was desperate, acknowledging that that man was guilty of a cowardly desertion of the post assigned him by Heaven, who deprived himself of life before his situation in it was become hopeless. Now the light of the Gospel has shewn us,  
 that

that this is a situation, which to those from SERM.  
whom the divine protection is not finally XVI.  
withdrawn, can never happen; for with   
whatever difficulties we are surrounded,  
however hard it may be to make us a way to  
escape, is any thing too hard for God?  
What shall make His ear heavy, that it can-  
not hear? Or, when will His hand be  
shortened, that it cannot save? But until  
one of these things do come to pass, even  
by the confession of the ablest patrons of  
suicide, those guilty of it are counteracting  
the dispensations of their Creatour, and  
trampling under foot His appointment.  
And are not these hopeful recommendations  
to the mercy of Him before whose throne  
they are going to appear? Or even if a  
man, from the consciousness of enormous  
guilt, conceive, that he has thrown himself  
entirely out of the divine mercy, is it not  
better to stay on earth, where the fulness of  
God's wrath is not poured forth, than to  
plunge himself into the bottomless pit at  
once? Is it not better to try the possibility  
of humble resignation prevailing to the di-


SERM. minution of the divine resentment, than to  
 XVI.  deprive himself of all opportunity of laying  
 hold on mercy that might be proffered?

These are questions which a child might answer, and, by his determination, decide on the futility of every thing urged in defence of this last effort of the imbecility of human passion, and prove, that unless where insanity had disturbed the understanding, the wilful commission of this daringly impious act, could be perpetrated only by those in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.

Having thus traced the growth of anger through its two chief branches, and shewn that the first indulgences of this passion contain the seeds of the most dreadful effects, soon producing hatred, and “who-soever hateth his brother is a murtherer,” your own thoughts must have anticipated the exhortation with which this discourse should be closed, by representing to you how  
 I much



much it behoves us to restrain the first SERM.  
fallies of wrath. Reflection on their own XVI.  
experience will, to the minds of any who  
have hitherto suffered themselves to be  
hurried away by gusts of passion, bring the  
remembrance of great hazards they have  
run in the moments of their rage, hazards  
of doing what would have infixed deep and  
lasting wounds in their hearts: and the  
sight of the absurdities, as well as the crimes  
into which they run, who are under the in-  
fluence of violent anger, might serve as an  
admonition to those whose heat of temper  
is not yet become habitual, to use their ut-  
most vigilance to repress every tendency  
thereto: and especially should it move all  
who have the care of young people, to at-  
tend to the earliest symptoms of this pas-  
sion, and use every mean (and particularly  
the powerful one of example) to curb it. Let  
us, therefore, henceforth recollect, that what-  
ever may be the cause of our indignation,  
the wrath of man worketh not the righte-  
ousness of God; that either in debate or  
action, coolness and patience, have an im-

SERM. measurable superiority over haste and passion; and that if, instead of following the  
XVI.  divine example of our Saviour, we give place to the devil, we shall soon resemble him in our works, and finally partake with him in his fate.

# SERMON XVII.

ON ADULTERY.

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EPHES. v. 6.


*Let no man deceive you with vain words :  
for because of these things cometh the  
wrath of God upon the children of dis-  
obedience.*

**M**OSES, when recounting to the people SERM.  
of Israel the blessing and the curse XVII.  
which he set before them, told them, that  
when all nations, seeing the evils which  
their iniquities would bring upon their land,  
should ask, “ Wherefore hath the Lord  
done thus unto this land ? What meaneth  
the heat of this great anger ? men would  
say, because they have forsaken the covenant  
of the Lord God of their fathers ; and that  
there-


SERM. therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled  
 XVII. against the land, to bring upon it all the  
 curses written in the book of the law."

And might not a question and answer similar to these be properly put and returned on the present state of christendom? Wherefore (it might surely be asked) hath the providence of God permitted so many nations to become a prey to anarchy and confusion? Why suffered the most cruel ravages of war to spread themselves so far and so wide? Why allowed the still more pernicious extension of the most false and impious principles, of the most destructive and diabolical corruptions? Because (it might too as surely be answered) the inhabitants of these countries have forsaken the Gospel preached unto their fathers, have taken unto themselves other rules of conduct, and thus provoked the Lord to treat them, in His wrath, as children of disobedience.

There are, I am sensible, many who, for these our sufferings, would look no farther than the *immediate* causes of them, and  
 tracing

tracing back the course of events through SERM.  
their chain of connection, imagine they XVII.  
had sufficiently accounted for all that has   
befallen us, by stating the measures which  
one nation had pursued, and the policy  
which another had adopted; but all who,  
by thus leaving the divine providence out of  
the account, do, in fact, deny the univer-  
sality of its operation, do really deny also the  
perfection of God, (and that, indeed, is His  
existence as God) no less effectually, than  
did those blasphemous wretches, who, in  
the course of the rapid revolutions which  
have lately taken place among them, did at  
one season govern the French nation. Most  
ancient is the maxim, that “affliction  
cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth  
trouble spring out of the ground.” And  
the question is put by a prophet, “Shall  
there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath  
not done it?” Whenever, therefore, we  
find adversity overtake us, under whatever  
shape it comes, it is our duty, and will be  
our wisdom to enquire, Whether our ini-  
quities have not called for the chastisement?  
looking




SERM. XVII.  looking upon the reasonings of those who would persuade us, that God never, or even seldom visits for human offences, as the vain words of ignorant men, tending only to deceive. In confirmation of which, apply your attention to facts; mark unrighteousness of every kind attended of natural and inevitable consequence, by sufferings; and these sufferings, ye may observe, men as naturally ascribe to the wrath of Heaven. Turn, then, to the book of the Holy Scriptures, and that as containing an account not only of the will, but also of the government of God, explains the facts observed, declares them to be the visitations of the Governour of the universe; and that ye may not doubt of this declaration being made on His authority, fixes on a particular people in whose history this course of retribution shall be singularly visible and steady; and whose sufferings, in consequence of their transgressions, being long before described, do, on their arrival, infallibly demonstrate the inflicter. And thus, by publishing the history of that people among  
the

the nations was light spread over the earth; SERM.  
and, together with the renewed precepts of XVII.  
righteousness given in the Gospel, there was  
set before the world an admonitory lesson,  
that their disobedience to the divine laws  
would be visited in proportion to the in-  
struction in the will of God with which  
they are favoured.

This is a point particularly insisted on by  
the great apostle of the Gentiles, throughout  
his epistles, that to the Hebrews especially  
is manifestly written with a view to establish  
it, while in the text the same principle is  
acknowledged, and a caution given us not  
to permit the specious reasonings of deceit-  
ful or deceived men, to persuade us, that  
we can disobey the commandments of God,  
and yet escape the penalties threatened in  
the breach of them. “ Let no man deceive  
you with vain words ; for because of these  
things cometh the wrath of God upon the  
children of disobedience.”

The

SERM. The vices to which St. Paul here more  
XVII. particularly refers, are fornication, and all  
manner of uncleanness in word or deed,  
and covetousness, and the topics from  
whence are drawn those wretched reason-  
ings, which are too often urged for the im-  
punity of such crimes, and which he has  
denominated *vain words*, are sufficiently  
known; neither should they at all be re-  
called to your remembrance from this place,  
but with the hope of arming you against  
them. And even for this purpose, if ye be  
true to yourselves, little need be said, since  
all these pleas of the vicious, (those excepted  
which go to the denial of the divine autho-  
rity of revelation, and are therefore to be  
considered only as the desperate effusions of  
men who love darkness rather than light,  
*because* their deeds are evil) since all other  
pleas on this head, I say, may be resolved  
into the two general ones, of human infir-  
mity, and the mercy of God, both of which  
must, in their extent, be beyond all com-  
parison better known to our heavenly Father  
than

than they can be to us, and yet hath it seemed SERM.  
 good to Him to lay on us the commands He XVII.  
 has, and to denounce the severe penalties we   
 dread on the breach of them; from which  
 fact alone it is plain, that these reasoners  
 most grossly deceive themselves in the  
 ground on which they argue.

The truth indeed is, that were there no  
 positive penalties annexed to these vices, yet  
 from the nature of moral and intelligent  
 beings they necessarily do, what St. Peter  
 most justly terms *war against the soul*.  
 Since by lessening men's powers of self-  
 restraint, and inflaming their evil affections,  
 they render them incapable of being even  
*harmless* members of society, and unable to  
 derive enjoyment from any resources of their  
 own minds. Whence they become totally  
 unfit for admission to the assembly of the  
 blessed above, and as incapable of ease or  
 happiness wherever they might exist.

It is not my present purpose to enter on  
 the proof of these consequences in respect  
 to

SERM. to the several evil courses to which the  
 XVII. apostle in the text refers, it is to the enormity and punishment of one particular crime which stalks barefaced through the land, in the commission of which the prince and the peasant are equally shameless, and which, though most ruinous to the peace, and most destructive to the first principles of society, is, (strange to consider,) unrestrained by any penal laws, that I mean now to confine my discourse, and ye cannot be at a loss to discern that adultery is the crime to which I allude; a crime of which the frequency lessens our horror at it, and prevents our considering the various aggravations with which it is always accompanied. Otherwise would it be possible that men who consider mistrust of their promises as one of the worst aspersions that can be cast on their characters, should look upon a breach of one of the most solemn engagements that can be made as a thing of no disgrace! Because the sacred volume is not kissed, is it to be thought no oath is taken when God is called to witness the truth of a covenant entered



entered into before the altar? Mark here SERM.  
the horrible, yet contemptible hypocrisy of XVII.  
the human heart! There are who will con-  
sider the forfeiture of a word passed at a  
gaming-table as a reproach to be avoided at  
every risque, and yet mock at the breach of  
a promise attended with every circumstance  
to mark it as sacred. The man who is  
guilty of the former, they will (and not  
unjustly so far) deem a villain, but the  
other, who has acted far more iniquitously,  
they have—what shall I say? Language  
furnishes not a term sufficiently strong to  
express the unprincipled absurdity of this  
conduct, they have—the wisdom and the  
modesty to call an honest man.

So then, he who with feigned affection  
induces a woman to confide all her hopes of  
happiness in this world in his hands; who  
vows before God and the church that he  
will keep himself only unto her as long as  
they both shall live; yet at one and the same  
time torments her with the keenest mortifi-  
cation by leaving her bed for that of another,

SERM. and tramples under foot the most solemn  
 XVII. protestations, is an honest man! And he  
 who enters the house of an unsuspecting acquaintance, perhaps of an intimate friend, and seduces his wife from her conjugal duty and attachment, is an honest man! While those who by force plunder us of our money, or by stealth carry off our goods, are justly represented as robbers, thieves, nuisances to society, unfit to live. Yet compare these crimes either by the breach of obligation they contain, by the sufferings they occasion to individuals, or by the mischief they produce in society, and ye will find that the thief (who still deserves the fate he meets with from the executioner's hand) is the less atrocious criminal.

It is true, that he who is guilty of theft transgresses the commandment of his Creator; but doth the adulterer less? or hath not He who hath said, "Thou shalt not steal," said also, "Thou shalt not commit adultery?" While he who does the last breaks not an implied only, but an express compact,

compact, if he sin against his own partner. SERM.  
And if it be with his neighbour's wife, he XVII.  
partakes in the sin of her breach of covenant, or perhaps as the tempter, has the heavier share of the guilt. The thief commits no breach of hospitality, betrays no confidence, bursts no bonds of friendship. But how often do all these aggravating circumstances accompany the adulterer's crime! How much more atrocious, therefore, are the practisers of this in breaking through the obligations incumbent on them, than those whom the general voice of mankind condemns as fit objects of publick justice!

And what are the sufferings occasioned to individuals by the one tribe of criminals in comparison with those which are suffered from the others! Ask the husband with whose loved partner the arts of the seducer have succeeded, of which he had most willingly have been bereft, his property or his wife? Ask the father whose daughter being drawn aside from the path of conjugal fidelity is consigned to infamy, what pecuniary

SERM. loss could have pierced his heart with half  
 XVII. the pangs he has suffered from the delusion  
 of his child? No disgrace attaches, no hard  
 reflections are to be borne by the family  
 whose habitation has been robbed. But the  
 children of the adulterers will hardly escape  
 bitter remembrances of their mother's crime,  
 even if her example prevail not to mislead  
 her daughters into the same condemnation.  
 Thus are afflictions heaped on all the nearest  
 connections of the degraded female, while  
 she herself, driven from the circle of reput-  
 able society, is left a prey to shame, remorse,  
 and solitude.

This indeed it may be said is not univer-  
 sally the case; vice, on the other hand, it  
 is to be lamented, sometimes meets with  
 countenance; but then it is from such as the  
 criminal herself is conscious either are guilty  
 of the same offence, or have some secret  
 motive for their conduct honourable to  
 neither party. So that by these means the  
 temporal sufferings of the individual alone  
 are alleviated, and those but partially; while  
 the

the mischief occasioned to society is increased SERM.  
 instead of diminished; which publick evil XVII.  
 was the last point on which I suggested a  
 comparison between the enormity of those  
 transgressions, the deep criminality of which  
 no one disputes, and that of adultery.

The absurd perverseness of vice and infidelity hath indeed contested the mischievous effects of theft and robbery on the public welfare; but I do not recollect, that even the presumption of these enemies of righteousness hath endeavoured to set adultery on the same footing. It is too manifest, that by this crime the first link in the chain of society is broken, and the bond of affection between husband and wife being burst, disorder is introduced into their families, and an evil example (which men are at least as prone to follow as a good one) afforded to the neighbourhood: whence if we even suppose this to be the first instance of such a transgression, what was before an *unheard of* crime becomes no longer such; and the repetition of it being consequently less



SERM. dreaded, an high road is gradually formed  
XVII. for profligacy, and all the amiable affections  
of nature are at length swept away by a deluge of licentiousness. If an illicit commerce be carried on without the privity of the party with whom the matrimonial contract is broken by it, much falsehood and treachery must necessarily be committed; but if with such privity, there then is formed a baseness of character which will infect all the other transactions of such depraved wretches; and if these be numerous, (which they must be in every country where adultery is prevalent,) the national character itself becomes foiled with it; and judicial inflictions of the Governour of the universe in course follow.

If ye think that this is not a just statement of the fact, turn over the records of the world, and discover, if ye can, a nation where this crime hath been common and yet unaccompanied with other symptoms of general corruption, or where it hath prevailed and yet escaped the visitations of the divine judge-

judgements. In Judah it was prevalent together with impiety, idolatry, oppression, robbery, and drunkenness. In Rome it was not known till those times of depravity which reduced the mistress of the world herself to a state of slavery, and in a neighbouring nation, which has of late been punished after so exemplary a manner, it existed but in company with other most nefarious practices, which cried aloud to Heaven for vengeance on that polluted people. And lastly, of our own country what shall we say? Can we plead, That though it be indeed defiled with this, it is not infected with other crimes; that the profligacy of the nation does not branch itself out into any other particulars; for that impiety, drunkenness, theft, fraud, lying, perjury, extortion, and treachery, are not heard of among us? Or on the contrary, must we not acknowledge, that the same corruption of morals, the same loss of all virtuous principle which leads one part of the dissolute among us to commit, and with shameless front defend this

SERM. crime, induces both them and others to  
 XVII. practise without remorse the rest of the  
 enormous transgressions for which our land  
 groaneth under the just inflictions of the  
 universal Judge?

And for the other question, Whether the people among whom adultery has become prevalent have ever escaped the judgements of Heaven? It ought to be again observed, that the atheistical reasonings I noticed in the beginning of this discourse, by which the evils that befall nations are ascribed to any thing rather than the indignation of God at their vices, are obviated (and purposely so it should seem) by the Lord's having chosen a particular people avowedly to shew forth his glory; and expressly punished them for the very crimes on account of which we are in the text assured the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. Whence there is afforded unto us ample ground to conclude, or rather a lesson instructing us, that when other nations, guilty of the same crimes, suffer  
 under

under similar afflictions, they are in fact SERM.  
 punished by the same hand. Give ear then XVII.  
 to the forcible terms in which the Lord did  
 by His prophet menace Jerusalem for the  
 crime of idolatry and that of adultery.  
 “How shall I pardon you for this? Thy  
 children have forsaken me and sworn by  
 them that are no gods: when I had fed  
 them to the full they then committed adul-  
 tery, and assembled themselves by troops  
 in the harlot’s houses. Shall I not visit for  
 these things, saith the Lord, and shall not  
 my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?  
 Go ye up upon her walls and destroy; take  
 away her battlements, for they are *not the*  
*Lord’s.*” Neither is this the only Scripture  
 in which we find it numbered with the  
 blackest crimes, in Leviticus the law saith,  
 “And the man that committeth adultery  
 with another man’s wife, even he that com-  
 mitteth adultery with his neighbour’s wife,  
 the adulterer and the adulterers shall surely  
 be put to death,” and in the prophecy of  
 Hosea it closeth a catalogue of offences for  
 which compleat desolation is threatened,  
 “Hear

SERM. “ Hear the word of the Lord ye children  
 XVII. of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy  
 with the inhabitants of the land, because  
 there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge  
 of God in the land. By swearing, and  
 lying, and killing, and stealing, and com-  
 mitting adultery, they break out, and blood  
 toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land  
 mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein  
 shall languish with the beasts of the field,  
 and with the fowls of Heaven. Yea the  
 fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.”

And now consider, I beseech you, Is the  
 Lord the God of the Jews only? Is He not  
 the God of the Gentiles also? and shall not  
 consequently His judgements extend through  
 all the earth? For this reflection will teach  
 you whither to refer the afflictions of your  
 own country, and not to think that He who  
 visited these crimes so severely on His own  
 people, would leave them altogether unpun-  
 ished in us. But the rigour of the law,  
 some of you would here probably reply,  
 extendeth not to the Gentiles; and perhaps  
 ye



ye would add the passage of the Gospel, so SERM.  
perversely used by the sensualist, (who can, XVII.  
as well as the tempter, quote Scripture for  
his own purposes,) I mean our blessed Sa-  
viour's words to the woman taken in adul-  
tery, "Neither do I condemn thee, go, and  
sin no more." But a solitary instance of  
pardon is no repeal of a law; were it so,  
this woman would never have been brought  
before our Lord, since the authority of Da-  
vid's case would at once have cleared her.  
In fact, with what she might have to urge  
in extenuation of her guilt, as want of in-  
struction, badness of example, the arts of  
a seducer, or the consent perhaps (for there  
have been some instances of such nefarious  
baseness) of a husband, we are totally un-  
acquainted. We know, however, that her  
accusers had other views than the mere ex-  
ecution of justice in asking our Lord's de-  
cision; they sought either to embroil Him  
with the government of the country, should  
he venture to pronounce a capital sentence,  
or to destroy his credit with the people if  
he gave a determination contrary to the words  
of

SERM. of Moses; in both which purposes they  
XVII. were totally disappointed by His making  
the clearness of their own consciences the  
condition of their executing the law, and  
for His not proceeding to it Himself, though  
without sin, His own words referring per-  
haps to this occasion, as delivered almost  
immediately after it, yield a sufficient reason,  
“ I judge no man,” and again in another  
discourse, “ I came not to judge the world,  
but to save the world.” The day indeed is  
fast approaching, when together with the  
rest of the human race, this woman will  
stand before His tribunal to receive, in His  
irrevocable sentence, the recompence due to  
her works. But His first coming being to  
redeem, and bring to repentance those whom  
He is hereafter to judge, had He then inter-  
fered in the execution of the laws of His  
country, except in the single instance of  
cleansing His father’s house from profana-  
tion, should we not ere this have been asked,  
“ Where was the dignity of our master?”

But

But to overthrow at once all the vain SERM.  
reasonings founded on this transaction, XVII.  
What was the determination which our  
Lord in fact delivered but “Neither do  
I condemn thee; go, and sin no more?” A  
decision of which ye may, and of which I  
am now calling on you to take the benefit. I  
have not said, I have, I thank God, no  
ground from His word to say, That if we  
sincerely repent of our misdoings and amend  
our conduct, the judgements under which  
we suffer will not be withdrawn; but the  
doctrine I would impress on your hearts, is,  
that they are inflicted for the transgressions  
which continue to be practised among us;  
and if these be not broken off by repentance,  
the visitations of the divine justice will gra-  
dually encrease, and end only in our destruc-  
tion. Great as our present sufferings are,  
they are only corrections which are given in  
mercy, and by forming a completion of those  
words of revelation in which the sins pre-  
valent among us are threatened with chas-  
tisement here, become a pledge, too, that  
those menaces will likewise be fulfilled,

SERM. which assure us, that the same crimes, if  
 XVII. not timely repented of, will meet with ever-  
 lasting vengeance hereafter. Thus, then,  
 is the Christian provided with a complete  
 answer to all the vain words by which the  
 foolish or the profligate would persuade him,  
 he may indulge his evil affections and yet  
 escape punishment. The wrath of God,  
 he may say, we see from the most manifest  
 facts, does, as it is denounced it should,  
 overtake the children of disobedience in this  
 world; have we not, therefore, the best  
 pledge, the firmest assurance, that the me-  
 naces which the same teachers have uttered  
 in His name, as to the next state, will  
 likewise be fulfilled? “Go to, now, may  
 he proceed, ye adulterers and ye adul-  
 tresses, be not deceived with the counte-  
 nance ye receive from the world! Know ye  
 not that the friendship of the world is en-  
 mity with God? Submit yourselves there-  
 fore unto Him. Resist the devil and he will  
 flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He  
 will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands,  
 ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double-  
 minded

minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up." For your sins, are they that have separated between Him and you, and for want of repentance alone, doth His wrath rest upon the children of disobedience!

SERM.  
XVIII.  







# SERMON XVIII.

ON SEDUCTION.

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ST. MATT. XVIII. 6.

*But whoſo ſhall offend one of theſe little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-ſtone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the ſea.*

THE ſignification in which the term SERM.  
*offend* is here employed being ſome- XVIII.  
what different from the common uſe of it,   
it is proper to ſtate, that its meaning in  
theſe words of our bleſſed Saviour is, *to*  
*cauſe to ſin*, as in the eighth verſe of the  
ſame chapter, where He ſays, “ If thy  
hand or thy foot offend thee cut them off,  
and caſt them from thee;” ſo that in the  
VOL. II. c c paſſage

SERM.

XVIII.

passage at present before us, it is declared, that whosoever shall terrify or seduce one of the disciples of Christ from obedience to His commandments, or make him deny the faith, shall suffer under a sentence worse than that of death. Neither is it difficult to discern sufficient reasons for the severity of the penalty here menaced; the loss incurred by those who deny the faith, or keep not the words of the Lord, is not limited to this life, but includes in it everlasting banishment from the presence of God, to the place of torment appointed for the devil and his angels. What then do they in justice deserve, who, to gratify their own passions, bring a fellow-creature under such condemnation? Unless we presume, (which we cannot do without denying His adorable perfection,) that the Lord looks with unconcern on the fate of His moral creatures, we must suppose, that He will require every ruined soul at the hands of him who brought it to destruction: but this supposition is advanced into a certainty, by the consideration of the very great interest He hath

shewn He takes in human salvation, by SERM.  
the inestimable price paid for the redemption XVIII.  
of mankind: and the heinousness of the  
crime of causing one of these little ones to  
offend can never be duly estimated, unless  
we take into the account, that it is destruction  
of him for whom Christ died.

Various are the means by which this fearful degree of guilt is contracted; but it is with the design of speaking to one only of the most atrocious of them, that of female seduction, that I have selected the words read to you for the text. This offence which no language can duly paint in all its horrors, is unhappily one of those to which the legislature of our country has paid a very inadequate attention; leaving some of the most defenceless of its subjects an unvindicated prey to the lustful barbarity of the most reprobate portion of our species; and the sum of the miseries consequently heaped on the numerous victims of these detestable wretches exceeds all calculation, and defies all human retaliation.

SERM. To heighten the enormity of this nefarious practice, there is scarcely a circumstance of baseness that is thought to encrease the guilt of any other species of wickedness with which it is not attended. In the first place it is necessarily accompanied in its course with the vilest falsehood, and the grossest hypocrisy. Under the semblance of one of the tenderest attachments of which the human breast is capable, under pretence of the warmest love is the affection of the intended victim sought; and in many cases through a considerable space of time is every appearance of the sincerest regard, which the most marked attention and repeated and solemn protestations can afford, preserved. And against whom is it that the vile dissembler thus exerts his art? Who is it that he thus besets with a fixed purpose of ruining her, concealed by asseverations of the most unshaken constancy? An unsuspecting innocent, who, from the fair purposes and honest feelings of her own heart, judges favourably of his; who, unacquainted with the deceptions of mankind, and unpractised in



in disguising her sentiments, pours into the bosom that she imagines faithful, confessions of her love for the villain, who, with the unrelenting cruelty of Satan, is coolly planning means to humble and desert her. SERM.  
XVIII.

To attack the unprepared and unsuspecting is deemed cowardly, and to betray a friend is justly accounted treacherous; but both the cowardice and treachery existing in these cases are heavily aggravated in that before us, by first making every effort to obtain the confidence of an harmless and unsuspicious female, and when her attachment is so secured, that she is ready to forsake father and mother, brother and sister, nay, to follow her seducer wherever his fate shall carry him, and dare with him to encounter all the hardships of the world, and struggle with all the difficulties of poverty, when having renounced all others she looks to him as her only protector, her most affectionate friend, then imposing on her credulity and her love, to degrade her from the rank to which chastity and purity entitled her, to


SERM. that of an outcast from society, a prostitute  
 XVIII. for hire, is a transaction so basely perfidious,  
 so atrociously ungrateful, and manifests the  
 obdurate cruelty of an heart so hardened by  
 vice, that those guilty of it, although in  
 their own estimation often men of liberal  
 mind, above any thing dishonest or unfair,  
 do in truth act the part of some of the  
 most contemptible and hateful wretches with  
 which the earth is burthened.

There have been instances of the seducers' murtherring the women they betrayed, to prevent either the burthen or the shame that threatened them; and I should conceive, that there are very few who could coolly reflect on the scene of a young female's supplicating for mercy from him against whom her only offences are having loved him undeservedly, and trusted him too far, while he, regardless of her endearing pleas, and the earnest entreaties she utters in all the anguish of her soul, stands ready to destroy the life that was devoted to himself, without being affected with compassion for the poor suffering

fering object, and with indignation at the SERM.  
diabolical cruelty of her murtherer. Yet XVIII.  
how does this cruelty surpass that of those  
who consign the helpless creature they have  
deluded to the actual wretchedness, and  
consequent misery, of a life of prostitution?  
Hitherto, perhaps, under the fostering hand  
of a tender parent, she has known little but  
indulgence, been kept at a distance from  
difficulties, preserved a stranger to want;  
taught to look forward to a life of ease and  
domestick comfort, and encouraged in this  
prospect by the suggestions of the very  
wretch who finally deprived her of it: and  
now on a sudden, her seducer's lustful views  
accomplished, he drops the mask, and lets  
her know, that she has forfeited the favour  
of her parents, left her father's house and  
withdrawn herself from every friend, to  
glut the inordinate desires of one, who,  
worse than the beasts that perish, soon  
cloyed with enjoyment, becomes an enemy  
to his mate, and compels her to seek a sup-  
port by means not less criminal than disgust-  
ing. Immediately, to all the pleasing  
prospects

SERM. prospects she had so vainly formed, succeeds  
 XVIII. the woeful scene of a precarious subsistence  
 among the most profligate of mankind, exposed to the scorn of the sober, and the brutal insults of the debauched. If sinking under these afflictions she quickly find an early grave, has not her seducer been her murderer also, and made, too, her death more miserable by torments?

But, if when thus thrown into the haunts of vice in search of bread, she yield to the torrent of depravity, and becoming deaf to the rebukes of conscience, insensible to the stings of remorse, freely joins in the enormities of her companions, in all the guilt in which she thus plunges, who causes her to offend? For the miseries of her encreasing degradation, when she sinks from the fashionable courtesan to the common street-walker, and at last, subdued by poverty and disease, perishes in a garret or a cellar, whom has she to thank but her seducer? That I do not too strongly paint the calamities to which these poor deluded creatures  
 are

are exposed, the streets and almost every SERM.  
place of publick resort bear witness. And XVIII.  
yet these are but the beginning of sorrows;   
for what must be the feelings of a soul  
laden with the guilt of innumerable impuri-  
ties, perhaps of blasphemies, accustomed  
only to scenes of vice, and incapable of  
aught but sensual enjoyments, on finding  
itself separated from the body? Convinced  
now by experience of the reality of another  
state, with what horror must it look for-  
ward to all the consequences which it was  
when in the body warned, await the sinner  
in that state! These, indeed, are agonies of  
which we cannot form an adequate concep-  
tion, yet they can hardly be equal to those  
which must succeed them when summoned  
to judgement, and having all its dread fore-  
bodings realized in a sentence of condem-  
nation, the condemned spirit is driven from  
the presence of the Lord to dwell for ever  
in those regions of torment which shall re-  
sound with weeping and gnashing of teeth.  
And what shall the wretch who was the first  
cause of a being that was capable of hap-  
piness



SERM. pinels as great as the misery to which it  
 XVIII. is thus consigned, falling into the last, ex-  
 ~~~~~ pect as his reward?


That such will hereafter meet with the recompence they deserve we know, but is our knowledge of this a reason why we should not exert ourselves to prevent their ravages among the young and innocent? Is it a reason why we should not discountenance men of such characters? Yet are they commonly received without any mark of disapprobation; nay, sometimes treated even with partiality by individuals of that sex to which their practices ought to be objects of horror and detestation. And is not this giving encouragement to transgression? Or will those who do it be cleared from the charge of partaking in other men's sins by the iniquitous plea, that it was only a maid-servant or a woman of low degree that the seducer ruined? Are then the souls of the poor less precious in the sight of our common Creatour than those of the rich and the great? Did not Christ die for all? Or have not the poor the Gospel preached unto them? Be she then
 the

the meanest of womankind that has been SERM.
seduced from the paths of innocence, al- XVIII.
though in describing the consequent tem-
poral sufferings of her connections, or even
of herself, some circumstances must in truth
be omitted that should be noticed in the
case of one of higher degree and better edu-
cation, yet as to that point in comparison
with which all the rest are as nothing,
her loss and her seducer's guilt, and conse-
quently that of all who make themselves
any way accessory to it, are as great as they
could be if she were the daughter of a mo-
narch.

But this particular of being accessory to
a crime so nefarious, and replete with con-
sequences so miserable, deserves more accu-
rate consideration. To one ignorant of the
exceeding degree of wickedness practised in
the world, it would appear incredible, that
there should be women so hardened in ini-
quity, so past all sense of shame, so com-
pletely given over to a reprobate mind, as
to assist in seducing one of their own sex
from

SERM. from the paths of virtue, and help a man
XVIII. in forwarding the purposes of his lust: yet
are there no means so atrocious used for defiling the pure, and debasing the innocent, but that wretches of this description, who have not even the impulse of appetite to plead in mitigation of their crime, but are instigated only by avarice, or the diabolical wish of degrading others from that rank among God's moral creatures which they have lost themselves, have not assisted.

Besides that portion of them, which, to the disgrace of our country, are permitted to gain a subsistence little less than professedly by this horrid employment, in various shapes do these engines of Satan crawl on the earth; sometimes they appear as nurses, and sometimes even as teachers; often as domesticks, and oftener than all, perhaps, as occasional assistants in the work of an house. By these are the ears of the young, and yet innocent, assailed, and their minds tainted with lascivious discourse; by these are their imaginations heated with descriptions of pleasure
to

to be found in the paths of revelry and vice; SERM.
by these are messages carried from the se- XVIII.
ducer to his intended victim; by these are 
interviews brought about, and the means of
escape, if necessary, from the house of a
parent, or that of a mistress, contrived. If
then we be surrounded in life by those who
are so desperately wicked, is it not most
highly incumbent on parents and heads of
families to watch with unremitting vigilance
over all under their care? Or if through
want of such attention the unexperienced
and unwary are deluded to their destruction,
can they stand quite clear of having con-
tributed to their ruin, or causing them,
through want of warning or instruction, to
offend?


These, indeed, are questions which de-
mand the most serious consideration of the
characters to whom they are addressed.
Cruel is the behaviour of those parents,
who, seeking their own ease or pleasure,
leave their children at the most critical time
of life, when they are most easily deter-
mined

SERM. mined to seek pleasure or the rewards of
XVIII. virtue, to the care and conversation of domesticicks, or others of low education, from whom they can gain little desirable instruction, but may, from various possible motives, be misled into situations not only attended with danger or ruin in this world, but ending in everlasting misery in the next. Most unreasonable and absurd is surely the conduct of those, who, introducing their children to the walks of dissipation, or permitting them to waste their hours in reading books which have a tendency to little else than weakening the mind and inflaming the the passions, blame others only, when the principles they themselves have instilled, begin to operate, and their daughters embark in those courses of which they shewed them the favourable side. And impiously do those parents act, who, neglecting their most important duty of pointing out to their children the path to life and immortality, leave them unprovided with the maxims of truth, and the precepts of religion, to an unequal struggle

struggle with the world, the flesh and the devil. SERM.
XVIII.

As to those who stand in the relation of mistresses only to any of their own sex, such need hardly be told, that all under their roof have a claim to their care, their counsel, and protection; through the withholding of which should they be lost, the mistresses cannot remain blameless: while the good of which they may be the instruments, by teaching their servants the true principles of action, and forming in them habits of sober industry, neatness, and œconomy, is so extensive, as must make every good man who reflects on it, earnestly lament that change in the manners of our country which has drawn the wives of those of rank and property among us from the care of their families, to plunge them into scenes of licentiousness and riot: whence the cottages unsupplied with housewives instructed in the domestick duties, exhibit a scene as unlike those of their ancestors as disgraceful to the land,

SERM. land, and as ruinous to society as the palaces
XVIII. of their superiours.




While, however, we both justly and charitably warn the several characters already mentioned of their portion of guilt in this heavily menaced crime of making a disciple of Christ to offend, it is not to be denied, neither ought it to be passed by unnoticed, that the victims themselves, though seldom without great fault, are sometimes still more particularly to blame. True it is, that the ingenuous disposition, and easy pliant temper of youth, are by no mean an equal match for the craft of age; nor the inexperience of those unacquainted with the world, for the fair shows and deceitful allurements holden forth by those who are practised in its arts; especially when the seducer possesses the advantage of frequent and unsuspected access to the object of his pursuit, under the covert of any relation, a shocking aggravation of a crime sufficiently heinous even in a stranger, yet not unheard of among men.

men. But when those, among whose SERM.
greatest ornaments are to be reckoned timi- XVIII.
dity and a reserved behaviour, eagerly seek
promiscuous admiration, and strive to attract
general attention, when their wanton looks and
forward carriage encourage the debauched to
hope for an easy prey, however the folly of
a vitiated age may term the confidence of an
harlot the ease of a well-bred woman, the
ruined female contributes to her own de-
struction; and is in truth a corrupter herself
before she becomes corrupted. These truths
should be deeply impressed on those of every
rank, since she who throws herself into
temptation, has, if she fall, nothing to plead
in extenuation of her crime; as she loved
danger she can have no right to complain
if she perish in it; nor can a woman who
wilfully commits a sin threatened with ever-
lasting damnation, have cause to murmur if
for it she be banished for ever from the king-
dom of Heaven.

But the greater the misery thus awaiting
the guilty, the more earnest is the call on

SERM. all not to be partakers in their sins, by contributing in any measure to them. Yet from this how can they be clear who take from the horror and lessen the disgrace of such offences in the eyes of the young, by countenancing old offenders; who distinguish trespasses not by their intrinsic heinousness, but by the success of the guilty; and from whose eyes the prosperity of an abandoned woman is permitted to conceal the enormity of her transgressions? The Lord, we know, would not that any should perish, but that all should come to eternal life; and wonderful are the means He hath employed to bring them thereto. In what light then are those of His creatures to be viewed, who counteract this gracious purpose? Consider, if while God call outwardly by the ministry of His word, and inwardly by the admonitions of His Spirit, to a life of such holiness and purity as may render us meet to be partakers of the glory ready to be revealed, what are they doing who induce others to defile themselves, but opposing the dispensations of His mercy, and acting as the
enemies

enemies of righteousness? And when men and angels are convened before the throne of their Creatour, that his ways may be justified, by assigning to every one a recompence according to his works, can there, think ye, proceed against such a sentence less heavy than one that will make it better for them that a mill-stone were hanged about their necks, and they were drowned in the depth of the sea?

SERM.
XVIII.


1871
The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been elected to the office of the President of the United States since the year 1789. The names are given in alphabetical order, and the year of election is given in parentheses. The names are given in the order in which they were elected, and the year of election is given in parentheses.

George Washington (1789)
John Adams (1796)
Thomas Jefferson (1800)
James Madison (1808)
James Monroe (1816)
John Quincy Adams (1824)
Andrew Jackson (1828)
Martin Van Buren (1836)
Franklin Pierce (1852)
Abraham Lincoln (1860)
Ulysses S. Grant (1868)
Rutherford B. Hayes (1876)
James A. Garfield (1880)
Chester A. Arthur (1881)
Grover Cleveland (1892)
Benjamin Harrison (1888)
William McKinley (1896)
Theodore Roosevelt (1900)
William Howard Taft (1908)
Woodrow Wilson (1912)
Warren G. Harding (1920)
Calvin Coolidge (1923)
Herbert Hoover (1928)
Franklin D. Roosevelt (1932)
Dwight D. Eisenhower (1952)
John F. Kennedy (1960)
Lyndon B. Johnson (1964)
Richard M. Nixon (1968)
Jimmy Carter (1976)
Ronald Reagan (1980)
George H. W. Bush (1988)
Bill Clinton (1992)
George W. Bush (2000)
Barack Obama (2008)
Donald Trump (2016)



Date Due

JY 1- '58

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